



MARKETING and PROMOTION

Western
Carolina
UNIVERSITY

Entrepreneurial

Center *for*
Entrepreneurship
& *Innovation*

Master of Entrepreneurship Program
ME Cohort 6

Cover Design and Photography
© 2008 Dr. Robert J. Lahm, Jr.

Entrepreneurial Marketing and Promotion



Center *for*
Entrepreneurship
& *Innovation*

**The Small Business & Technology Development Center
supports entrepreneurship efforts through the
University System of North Carolina.**



Credits

This project was made possible, with gratitude to the Master of Entrepreneurship degree program students in ME Cohort 6.

Special thanks Carrie House for taking the initiative to serve as editor, collecting author contributions, and working to organize this eBook into a coherent “whole.”

[Dr. Robert J. Lahm, Jr.](#) initially conceived of this project and served as its Executive Director. His role included initial research and included design work for the creation of “virtual” book cover images, adaptations for the physical version, and this final product. His background in marketing has also been applied to the subsequent distribution efforts associated with this project.

Dr. Frank Lockwood, serves as Director of the [Master of Entrepreneurship](#) degree program. In addition to reviewing the initial submissions, he was also supportive of this project as an entirely new type of undertaking in terms of assignments pursued by graduate students.

Dr. Louis Buck, Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation Director, works tirelessly, serving as an active and engaged faculty member, in addition to handling numerous administrative tasks on behalf of the Center’s faculty, staff, and students. The Center pursues many initiatives for empowering current business owners, in addition to developing a whole new generation of future entrepreneurs. As it relates to the context of this present compilation, his own leadership skills are appreciated.

We would also like to thank the Small Business and Technology Center’s Director, Wendy Cagle, as well as its staff members who help small businesses in the community at large. Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation faculty members greatly appreciate their ongoing assistance, supporting students in our graduate and undergraduate entrepreneurship degree programs. We are pleased to have the [SBTDC](#) as a partner in our day-to-day efforts, and appreciate its generous support of this project.

Copyright and Permissions

All work in this project, Copyright 2008-2009 by the individual contributors named herein, and Western Carolina University's Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. This product may be freely distributed, as long as it is left intact and not altered in any way, including all pages, links, credits, and this notice.

Contents

Introduction

Marketing – Print Advertising

- 2.1 Business Cards
- 2.2 Newspaper and Magazines
- 2.3 Newsletters

Marketing – TV Advertising

- 3.1 Television Advertising

Marketing – Radio Advertising

- 4.1 Air Time

Marketing – Online Advertising

- 5.1 Internet Links and Banners
- 5.2 Internet Streaming

5.3 **Blogs**

5.4 **Emails**

5.5 **EBooks**

Marketing – Outdoor Media

6.1 **Signage**

Marketing – Mixed Media

7.1 **Multiple Marketing Channels**

7.2 **Media Kits**

Marketing – Internal

8.1 **Marketing Calendar**

8.2 **Pre-Sale Communication**

8.3 **Post-Sale Communication**

8.4 **Identity Systems**

Marketing – External

9.1 **Global Business**

9.2 **Networking**

Promotions

10.1 **Awards**

10.2 **Gift Certificates**

10.3 **Incentives**

10.4 **Contests**

10.5 **Seminars**

Appendices

Appendix A

Author Notes

Introduction

The entrepreneurial marketer must wear “many hats.” One of the most important of these “hats” is that of *chief evangelist* and promoter for his or her own enterprise. As it turns out, the initial “pitch” that a student or nascent entrepreneur in the practitioner world may have first made in the process of formulating and conveying the value of an idea for a business, or the product/service that underpins that business, is an all important one.

We must be able to express, just what it is we are offering in ways that people can easily grasp. A prospective customer must be able to perceive the value proposition, and quickly, as well as accurately, determine if that proposition is fitting for his or her own needs. Of course before any of this can happen at all, there must be actual merit in the idea for the business itself! The worst thing that can happen to an entrepreneur, is to be misunderstood, such that others do not fully appreciate the offerings of a business, assuming that they do have merit and would actually fulfill a need, if only people knew. At that point, the entrepreneur languishes, and will likely fail, if his or her point does not get across.

Relative to the above observations, they are only the beginning. Given a worthy business idea in the first place, and once having achieved the development of an effective message, (which should be accurate, ethical, and convey the true meaning of a proposition), that message must then be disseminated to the appropriate audience. At first glance, that audience might be seen as external to the business, but that would not be accurate.

Relative to the above observations, they are only the beginning. Given a worthy business idea in the first place, and once having achieved the development of an effective message, (which should be accurate, ethical, and convey the true meaning of a proposition), that message must then be disseminated to the appropriate audience. At first glance, that audience might be seen as external to the business, but that would not be accurate.

Employees must also grasp the nature of the business and its offerings, and be coached (and compensated) such that they too enthusiastically join in the chorus, and sing the praises of the enterprise and its products or services. It's a terrible waste of marketing dollars, to have a message "undone" because an employee does not care, was not trained and otherwise supported, or felt no stake in being a part of the business and its success, resulting from a lack of his or her own "buy-in." Creating that buy-in is the entrepreneur's job to do, as *chief motivator*, which requires putting on a similar "hat," relative to that which is worn when serving as *chief evangelist*.

Others, who may never be customers, must at least think well of the business, and want that business to remain as a member of the community where it is domiciled. We call this, a "reputation." Every one and every business has a reputation (or soon after launching establishes one), and it can be good or bad, or something in between. Nevertheless, the entrepreneur must cultivate a positive image by operating effectively, which helps to "spread the word" to others (and word about a bad reputation does indeed spread much faster, so this is critical).

There are many ways to create and disseminate marketing messages. To be effective, the entrepreneur must often make choices, and that can sometimes be

not so easy to do. That's what this eBook is all about, discussing options, and "how to," be effective at *Entrepreneurial Marketing and Promotion*. We think it will prove to be very practical, and useful to its readers.

Dr. Robert Lahm

2.1

How to use a business card creatively: The new low cost mini-advertisement

Author: David Reeves

You want a remarkable business card don't you? Of course you do. In many cases a business card is the first impression most people have of you and your business. The first few seconds of a business encounter make lasting impressions. One way to create and establish a lasting first impression is creatively using a business card.

This article will discuss three ways to use business cards creatively:

- * Design of the traditional business card
- * Presentation and business etiquette
- * Non-traditional, electronic formats

Traditional business cards are over five hundred years old. While the traditional design has consisted of black ink on white card stock, contemporary business cards use different colors of ink and various textures and colors of card stock. So how can you be more creative?

Remember that your business card is part of your image and should compliment your stationary, marketing and other forms of advertising. The business card layout, type, images, logo and colors should be consistent with your image. I recommend hiring a graphic designer who will follow the rules of thumb for

good graphic design to create a coordinated image. A good graphic designer can also creatively break the rules of thumb to make your card remarkable, to grab attention and evoke the intended reaction in your target market.

One way to creatively use a business card is to change the size. The traditional card is approximately 1.5 times wider than its height. Making the card longer, smaller or a different shape will help make your card stand out from your competition. Instead of basic black ink, change the color. In lieu of white card stock, change the color, texture or material of the card. Using recycled office paper with your company's vital statistics printed on it can be a way of demonstrating to your target market your firm's commitment to sustainable business practices. Use plastic, metal, wood or any materials that will attract attention and give a lasting impression to your target audience.

Make your business card represent the product or service you're selling. If you are a dentist, add impressions of teeth or incorporate floss into the card. If your business uses thin film technology, consider using a sample of your product as the card stock. If your business uses metal products, consider using thin sheet metal with various shaped cut-outs and perforations instead of plain white card stock. Make a folded card, a pop-up card, or a stretchable card made of rubber. You are only limited by your imagination. As a mini-billboard, you make your card stand out from your direct and indirect competitors by changing the size, shape, color and/or materials in a tasteful but remarkable way to differentiate yourself from the competition.

Presentation and business etiquette are other ways that business cards can be used creatively. Adopting proper Japanese business etiquette in the use of your business card is a way to distinguish yourself from the competition. If you do business with Eastern cultures, knowing and using this business etiquette is a must. In Western cultures, it is a way to be different and memorable.

As an American male from the traditional south, the first time I was introduced to Japanese business card etiquette, it made a lasting impression on me. Business cards are exchanged at the beginning of a business meeting and are considered part of the formal introduction. The caller bows slightly and presents his card with both hands. The recipient receives the card with both hands. The recipient studies the card, remembering the name and places the card (or cards if several people are involved) on the table face up during the meeting. It is considered bad manners to deal your business cards out on the table. It is also bad taste to keep removing a person's card from your pocket and putting it back during the meeting. Finally, it is impolite, if not insulting, to write on a person's business card in front of them. Since my introduction to this protocol, I have followed this example and have been amazed at the positive responses I have received. It is a simple yet creative way to help make you stand out from the crowd.

There are non-traditional, electronic formats you can use creatively for business cards. The first electronic business card that I remember seeing was a small, oval shaped CD-ROM that was a little larger than a standard business card. It had the company's name, address and phone numbers printed on the face and included a short audio/video presentation of the company's services. More recently, companies are giving away flash drives with imprinted logos which also serve as reusable storage devices. As part of a firm's overall marketing program, flash drives and mini CD's can be creative alternatives to business cards or additions to a company's marketing and advertising program.

Another non-traditional, creative use of business card information is the vCard and more recently the hCard. Both methods employ electronic technology to communicate, store and retrieve business contact information. The newer hCard is designed to facilitate the extraction and delivery of contact information via Internet search engines.

The logical extension of social and business networking as they relate to the creative use of business cards is the development of an electronic, interactive Rolodex like LinkedIn. According to their website (<http://www.linkedin.com/>), LinkedIn is an online network of business people who exchange business contact information to “find potential clients, service providers, subject experts, and partners who come recommended.” The LinkedIn site allows a person to stay current with their business network on a daily basis without having to reach out to each person individually.

2.2

Targeting your audience with newspaper zone and neighborhood editions as well as regional runs in national magazines

Author: Tom Philpott

If your business is involved in marketing a product or service, printed media is one of the traditional means of doing so. There are many forms of printed media to choose from, including local and national magazines and newspapers. What should be of the utmost importance in planning your advertising budget is making those advertising dollars stretch as far as possible. One of the ways to maximize advertising impact is by using targeted regional advertising in both newspapers and magazines.

Most major city newspapers publish regional editions in their outlying circulation areas. What this means to a local business owner is that advertising space is available in a regional section of a large-circulation newspaper at rates that are significantly lower than what would be charged for ad space in the main city edition. This is significant for a business owner because an ad in a regional edition can reach a targeted local audience and not be wasted on the masses who would never venture far enough to take advantage of the services the business offers.

Magazines offer another regional marketing route to potential customers. National magazines now offer editions that contain regional advertising.

Although national magazine ad rates are significantly higher than newspapers, regional editions of these magazines do offer lower prices. Rates can always be negotiated.

Unfilled advertising space, known as *remnant space*, is also sometimes available. If a publishing deadline is approaching, these spaces could be obtained at a substantial discount. Once a business has purchased an ad in a national magazine, even a small ad in the back of the book, it can then market itself with the phrase “as seen in Time” or whatever the publication happened to be. This can be a boost for many businesses, lending credibility in the minds of consumers.

Another area of advertising potential lies in regional magazines. There are many categories of regional magazines, such as shopper guides, real estate guides, travel, entertainment, and business publications. Business owners can study the audiences of these publications and pick the ones which most closely match the demographic of the intended target market. Ad rates in a regional magazine will be substantially lower than in a national magazine, corresponding with the circulation. The prevalence of regional magazines has exploded in the last two decades, and so has the opportunity for advertising in them.

It is worth the time to study each publication you plan to advertise in, whether it is a newspaper or magazine, and develop a feel for it. Be aware of the tone and “flavor” of each before investing advertising money and effort with them. Keep in mind that traditional print advertising still reaches an enormous population of readers.

Sources:

1. <http://www.marcommwise.com/article.phtml?id=239>
2. http://luminositymarketing.com/admin/pdf_file/LuminosityPerspectivesFeb08.pdf

2.3

Marketing with newsletters

Author: Peter Gibbs

The competitive business environment and the need to have a successful sustainable business forces entrepreneurs to be very creative as they try to penetrate a market. Today's technology forces most business owners to market their new entities using the Internet. Business owners need to study their targeted market, and then decide which marketing tool is best for their businesses. Depending on the type of business, newsletters should be strongly considered to market your business.

There are individuals who believe in reading about their desired products before making a purchasing decision. Since these individuals are typically highly educated or very detailed orientated individuals, business owners must solicit a marketing firm. A marketing firm can assist with writing a newsletter, because in most cases, the business owner will get one chance to make a lasting impression on a new consumer.

The venture capital industry is an ideal industry to use newsletters to market a business. Venture capitalists' by nature, prefer to read about a product before committing to a purchase. The business owner must make sure that the newsletter is accurate, clear and concise, delivered on a fairly regular basis, pique the interest of the consumer, and leaves the reader with a desire for more information or the desire to purchase the product. Although not very important

to a venture capitalist, packaging of the newsletter may be important, depending on the target market.

Accuracy of the newsletter is extremely important because the reader is probably someone with expert knowledge or experience in an industry. The newsletter should be created knowing that all the contents will be verified by the reader. The publisher of the newsletter must also understand that the reader is probably busy and/or receives many other publications in the mail, so being clear and concise is important. When deciding to use newsletters, the business owner must mail the newsletter at a rate that does not become annoying to the end user.

Newsletter must pique the interest of the consumer for this marketing strategy to be considered successful. The newsletter must be written in a way that makes the consumer want to know more about a product or service and/or encourages a consumer to make a purchasing decision.

In closing, business owners should not limit their imagination when marketing their business to penetrate an industry to print, television, radio and the Internet. After thorough research and analysis, owners should strongly consider the benefits of utilizing a newsletter to penetrate a particular target market.

3.1

TV advertising: Thanks to Cable TV, maybe you *can* afford it

Author: Daniela Pavel

If you analyzed your target market and you are ready to launch your marketing campaign, don't assume that TV advertising is too expensive for your business. Thanks to Cable TV, you CAN afford it. But before you start hunting the best deals and airtimes, stop and think: How much can I afford to spend on TV commercials? Do I want a standard clip or a customized one? What channels do my target markets watch? What shows do they like? Once you find answers to all the above questions, get ready to begin researching for TV advertising that fits your budget.

We all have moments when we find ourselves watching an interesting show or a movie on TV and suddenly, there it is...15 minutes of TV commercials we practically learned by heart from watching them over and over and over again. The question that comes up is "How can these companies afford so many airtime spots per month?" And we immediately assume that they must earn millions in profits since they can afford such a large marketing budget. The truth is, researching can stretch your budget by finding airtime of less than \$10 a day.

Not all commercials have to take the form of the ones we watch on ABC, NBC or TBS. Those are the ones that can cost over \$1,000 even in small markets. There are, however, overlooked ways to reach cable customers.

TV crawls are the least expensive Cable TV advertising. Next time you turn your TV to the Weather Channel, look at the bottom of the screen at the scrolling text. Those are called TV crawls. The Weather Channel allows businesses to advertise on TV crawls every 8's of an hour (such as 2:08, 2:18, 2:28, etc.). Such an ad could contain the company's name and contact information with a brief description. For example, "For brand name apparel, shoes and accessories, please visit us at <http://www.SYXTY6.com>". The news channels offer this type of advertising as well. The beauty of it is that the ads are very easy to write, being similar to newspaper ads, and the price per month could be less than \$100. The ad could appear for more than 25 times per day. Depending on the area in which the ad is viewed, this could be a very effective advertising method.

Among the least expensive Cable TV ads, are the full screen ads. These ads feature the name and contact information of the business over a picture of the business or the picture of your choice. These ads are placed on local TV stations and the price per month is even less than that of TV crawls, as low as \$50-60 per month. The risk of these ads is that no one might be watching them. These channels are all-ads channels with no programming. As a result, unless somebody loves ads or is looking for his/her own ad, no one else will be watching it.

For 50% more than you would pay for a TV crawl, you could advertise on the TV Guide Channel. You will get more exposure for the money you pay -- the cable company will send their reps to take pictures of your business, so no additional work for you.

If your advertising budget is larger, you will want to have a professionally designed ad and you will want to purchase airtime on local and national channels. For the minimum amount of \$500, you can purchase an already designed ad on which all you have to do is write the company name and contact information. An example of company selling pre-made TV ads is MPowerMedia

(<http://www.mpowermedia.com>). They have a wide selection of ads depending on the field in which your business fits. If instead you would like to have a customized ad, the price starts at \$950 when making a 6-month airtime commitment. The airtime rates depend on the size of your area and on your advertising budget. For example, for \$2,500 your ad will appear for at least \$139 times/month for six months on six channels. This means that the average cost per spot is \$17.99. Not a bad deal when you're thinking of all the customers you could gain. Other companies offering the same services are National TV Spots (www.nationaltvspots.com), Spot Runner (<http://www.spotrunner.com>) and Media Source (<http://www.mediacourseusa.com>).

Again, don't think that unless you have a large business, TV advertising is not one of your options. With a little research, even the smallest advertising budget can justify the need for TV commercials. All you need is perseverance and an Internet connection to find the best deals.

Sources:

1. Advertise on Cable Without Breaking Your Budget by Apryl Duncan, About.com
2. MpowerMedia.com

4.1

Bartering with the media: Swapping what you have for air time, ink, and other forms of promotional consideration

Author: Chris Parsnow

You've heard the same radio advertisement all morning and you wonder; how can that small company afford to be on the air over 10 times in one morning with each advertising spot costing over \$350? You have also seen the same company with commercials on local television stations. It's hard to believe that such a small company can afford so much air time. But not if you knew how they were paying for it....

That small business was bartering for air time: offering their services in exchange for air time or a reduction in price. By trading services between businesses you can save money, develop a good business network and increase advertising exposure. Additionally, bartering services can result in extra fringe benefits for the employees of a company, increase job satisfaction and come at little or no cost to their employer.

There are a couple basic types of bartering that can occur between businesses: direct compensation and cooperative advertising. Direct compensation is when one business trades their services or products for advertising time that they would have otherwise paid for. Cooperative advertising is where businesses exchange advertising space or airtime. All forms of media companies (radio, TV, newspaper, Internet), offer advertising slots on their station/company for a certain price and provide many different options. However, many times a

business will offer its services or products, if the media company will feature them as an advertiser and mention them on air as direct compensation or for a reduced price. This type of exchange usually decreases the overall cost of advertising to the non-media business because the members of the media company receive a benefit.

Many times morning radio shows advertise for clients who provide services to the radio station and the personalities are actual customers of the advertising business. These radio personalities are very effective in connecting with audiences and allow for a more personal advertisement than would be found by paying for a regular advertising slot. Many times providing the radio personalities with an example of your service or product helps to give them more material to describe your business and encourages a positive attitude toward your company. An added bonus is that the service or product may come up in their regular on-air discussions from time to time, only adding in the benefit of the barter.

When you consider bartering for air-time on local television stations it is good to remember that they are always looking for interesting news stories specific to their local area. Local businesses provide a good place to shoot local footage and also provide that company with good advertising opportunities. Usually the business can contact the television station and offer to let them shoot a segment at their location and buy advertising at the same time. This benefits the TV station by shooting at a location that connects to their viewers and benefits the business by providing discounted advertising time.

A recreational business named Happy Lake in central North Carolina hired a local radio station to broadcast from their location and provide day long advertising. In addition, the manager of Happy Lake offered to admit any member of the radio station to attend for free on the day of advertising.

Normally the cost of the radio station on-site advertising is \$2,500 dollars; however, because six radio station employees took advantage of the offer to go to Happy Lake free of charge, the radio station only charged the business \$1,750. If the six radio station employees were to pay for themselves, or the radio station had paid for them to attend, the total cost would have been about \$40 dollars. But because the manager of Happy Lake offered to do it as an extra perk to the radio station's employees, Happy Lake saved \$750, compared to the \$40 dollars they would have made from the radio station employees entry fees.

In a similar hypothetical example a restaurant may advertise on a radio station and offer the personalities free food to supplement the price of advertising. The radio station may also require the amount of food to be traded should equal the original cost of the advertising space and include the food as a fringe benefit to its employees. However, the restaurant would be trading the food at retail value for advertising time, which means they would still save the amount of profit margin built in to their food items.

The second major form of bartering is an exchange, sometimes referred to as cooperative advertising. In this type of bartering, companies exchange forms of advertising or advertising time. This may occur between companies that would be considered indirect competitors because the same clients may be patrons to both businesses but some factors may attract them to each business at different times. The best type of advertising exchange is between non-competing companies because each company gets to advertise to potential customers while having the peace of mind that the customers of the other business will not choose their business over yours, but will rather use both.

A cooperative exchange can best be described by again using the example of Happy Lake Recreation Center. They traded advertising space with the local gas station by trading signage space. The gas station was allowed to hang a 3 by 5 foot sign advertising their business at Happy Lake, while Happy Lake received

the same exposure at the gas station. Each advertisement benefited their respective business and cost the other business nothing, except the cost of the sign. This type of exchange is very common and in many parts of the country there are companies that serve as advertising exchange brokers. These brokers offer a one-stop-shop for small businesses to exchange advertising space with other local businesses, and only charge a small fee for providing this service.

An additional method of advertising that can be considered bartering is by donating or giving away merchandise with your company's name and logo printed on it. This offers customers a product for free or an extremely reduced price to encourage them to wear or use the merchandise so other people will see it. However, this is risky because the return on investment of these advertising campaigns is difficult to prove.

Bartering is a practice that has been going on for as long as businesses have been in operation. Whether a business is just starting out or is well established, the cost of advertising is always one that can be reduced without experiencing a decrease in market exposure. Every business should consider bartering for air-time as it is one of the most effective ways to save on advertising expenses and it also builds valuable contacts with other local businesses.

5.1

Using Internet links and banner exchanges to spread your message

Author: Mike Rabinowitz

Entrepreneurs on a shoestring budget can still pursue Internet marketing strategies such as Link Exchanges and Banner Ads as an attractive alternative to more expensive marketing methods.

The main purpose of Link Exchanges and Banner Ads is to drive traffic to your site so that you can sell your product or service. There is a built-in advantage to driving up the traffic to your site. The higher the traffic, the higher your website will rank on the major search engines which, in turn, will further drive more potential business to your site.

A Link Exchange is used to benefit two or more parties who are involved in similar businesses. A basic scenario would be to locate other businesses in a similar field and offer a simple exchange. You will link their company's site to yours and they will link your site to theirs. This is a free and easy way to increase traffic and awareness to your site and your product or services. There is a difficult balance you will need to achieve, however. You will want to avoid companies in the exact same business. This would be like Ford and GM swapping links. The best bet is to seek out complementary businesses or sites with which you believe you share a common demographic. For example, Site A markets skateboards and exchanges links with Site B which offers Alternative Rock music downloads. Both of these ventures target the younger crowd and

would mutually benefit from a link exchange. If you wish to reach a larger number of sites with which to exchange links or are having difficulty finding willing partners, you may wish to work through a third party. These companies have vast databases and, for a fee, can link you to as many sites as you can afford.

An example of one of these firms is LinkMarket (<http://www.linkmarket.com>). If cost is an issue, there are free alternatives out there such as LinksHighway (<http://www.linkshighway.com>). This company may not be as robust but offers much of the same services but free of charge. A caveat to consider is that many use link exchanges simply to boost their website ranking. Now you find you have a highly ranked website that is riddled with other companies web links all over it. If your intention is to simply have a highly ranked site on the major search engines and you wish to derive your traffic from prospective client's visiting your site based on your ranking, you or your webmaster may want to look into search engine optimization (uploading key words or 'meta-tags' to the major search engines) or plain old website promotion.

Banner Advertisement Exchanges are similar to Link Exchanges but in this case you are swapping advertisements that, when clicked, direct the customer to your site. Unlike Link Exchanges, it is more difficult to do on your own. You usually will need to link up with a banner exchange group such as GoBannerExchange (<http://www.gobannerexchange.com>) or Microsoft's Bcentral (<http://bcentral.com>).

The most appealing factor of banner ad exchanges is the cost effectiveness. Placing a banner advertisement on a company's site can be costly. Just like TV advertising, the more popular the show the higher the advertising costs;

conversely, the more popular the website the higher the banner advertising costs. This is the great benefit of banner exchanges.

Most banner ad exchange groups are free to participants. Unlike placing a banner ad independently, there is no cost for placing a banner ad on another website. You simply have to place someone else's banner on your site in exchange. When you join a banner exchange group and submit a banner, the exchanges will find another website to post your advertisement without charging a fee but they will require you to post at least one banner ad. Again, the more popular sites demand more for advertising on their website even when money is not exchanged - in this case, banner ads are being swapped. Based on their search engine ranking and your ranking, a ratio will be implemented by the banner exchange firm. For example a 3 for 1 ratio, the banner exchange will place one of your banner ads on a top site and in return they will place 3 banner ads from higher ranked firms on your site. Though this may be annoying, no money has changed hands so this is still technically FREE.

Again, the benefits are still there. The end result is higher traffic to your website and hopefully higher sales. You can also track the traffic to your site and analyze the sales increase versus the increased traffic and adjust your banner advertising accordingly. You will still have to balance the appearance of your website to the benefits of having your website strewn with banner ads. Additionally, you have some control over which ads you will not allow on your site by picking certain categories you find offensive, etc.

Whether you are using Link Exchanges or Banner Ad Exchanges or both, it is possible to educate the world about your product or services for little or no cost. You will need to balance the potential pitfalls, such as lack of control, with the obvious benefits. But for the price, these marketing techniques are hard to beat.

5.2

Now you can be a broadcaster, too: Using streaming Internet videos to demonstrate, educate, and sell

Author: James White

No matter the nature of the venture undertaken in today's markets, one question facing the entrepreneur is: "How do I effectively communicate with my customers, clients, or patrons through my online web presence?" As the online environment continues to mature and as broadband becomes more available to the general population, the ability to deliver richer media content has become possible. Online technologies like Adobe's Flash, Microsoft's Silverlight, and YouTube videos are examples that are growing in popularity. Some technologies like RealNetwork or Microsoft's media players have been around for some time and can allow users to play pre-recorded media (video and audio) or streaming real-time broadcasts. Flash exists on over 90% of all personal computers attached to the Internet and YouTube had over 5 billion views in the month of July (Lipsman, 2008).

One best known organization making use of this type of technology is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) which provides numerous pre-recorded lectures and panel discussions that have been conducted at the school. (For more information see <http://mitworld.mit.edu/>.) For entrepreneurs, the proper use of streaming media can help with product (or service) demonstrations -- it can provide a means of educating customers or clients and it can improve odds for business growth. The purpose of this article is to introduce the reader to the importance of using streaming media to enhance

communication with an intended audience and to provide some insight about use this technology within the framework of a venture's website.

Certainly words become more understandable when spoken (as opposed to written or printed) and even more impactful when visual clues are added. This idea can be found in the "picture is worth a thousand words" proverb. A message broadcast in both video and audio, like television commercials, has the opportunity to not only impart greater understanding about a product or service, but the message, if done creatively, may attract and keep the viewer's attention. "The main advantage of videos is their ability to instill curiosity in a person. An apt demonstration of this is when people are seen stopping at display windows of stores that have television displays in them" (Detty, 2007, par 2). The use of videos could increase the amount of time a customer or client spends on an entrepreneur's website, increasing the opportunity for improving brand recognition or getting a sale.

A recent survey by MarketingSherpa "revealed that using online video increased the responsiveness [of users] by as much as 49.5%" (Latchford, 2008). Additional supporting statistics concerning online video (multimedia) use are as follows:

- . 1 in 5 web users stream video every day
- . "57% of Internet users have watched videos online and most share what they find with others" and "49% of viewers age 18 - 29 watch YouTube videos" (Madden, 2007).
- . "the use of video by newspaper websites is expected to double over the next 12 months" (Baradell, 2007).

All of these facts reinforce the importance of multimedia (streaming video and audio) used to communicate with website viewers. As the web continues to mature and bandwidth increases, richer media tools will be introduced and

adopted by online viewers.

So once an entrepreneur decides to use streaming video, the first concern may be how to effectively add streaming video to a website in a way that does not detract from the venture's products or services. This concern should be a catalyst for initiating discussion with other individuals involved in the entrepreneurial venture. In addition, the following are some initial questions to consider:

- . What is it about the venture's products or services that could benefit from a video presentation?
- . Will my target market react positively to streaming video?
- . What should be the subject matter of the videos?
- . What will it cost and who will produce the videos?

The answer to the first question depends upon the product or service being offered and the possible answers are too many to be covered in this article. As a single example, newspapers and magazines have been delivering videos to their websites for a number of years. Specifically, *Car and Driver* delivers Flash versions of automobile reviews and auto show events to their viewers. This provides the magazine opportunities to deliver supporting advertising along with streaming videos which increases the likelihood of the viewer spending more time on the website and more ad revenue being generated.

If your target market relates well to an online presence, it is likely that their response to streaming video will be positive, as long as, the approach used is compatible with the product. For example, if the venture is a travel agency then videos of far away lands with hints of adventure and exciting voice-overs may be just the thing. If the product is tax accounting software then a video

demonstrating how to use the product may give potential buyers of the product more confidence regarding the product. If the venture is one that delivers a B2B service then streaming video could be used to keep clients up-to-date about recent events potentially affecting their business creating the need for clients to continue to visit the venture's website and to continue using the associated products or services. Picking the correct subject matter that aligns with the offered product or service will be one of the keys to retaining potential customers or clients or keep current ones.

Streaming videos come in two forms: live or on-demand. Many software vendors have live demonstration sessions of their products for purposes of educating users in new techniques and new releases of products. These live sessions are typically very simple and straightforward, last anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour, and provide the vendor a means of interacting with customers in a real-time environment. However, for many businesses, the most likely use of streaming video will come from pre-recording a message and having it available for viewing from the venture's website. Fortunately, integrating multimedia into a website does not have to be costly and can be accomplished with little professional help. "Digital cameras are now quite affordable and many will shoot several minutes of video [and using] free software like Picasa" can help with the management, optimization and uploading to most sites (Laycock, 2007).

With a little practice and maintaining the idea of "keeping it simple," videos can be produced that improve your potential (or current) customers/clients experience. Nathan Segal (2001) offers some key considerations when producing your own videos:

- . Plan the video shots in advance - use a storyboard.
- . Keep camera movements down to a minimum. Constant panning or zooming will not translate well on the web. Use a tripod where possible.

- . Be careful with the background - avoiding high contrast or bright backgrounds.
- . Keep the backgrounds simple - using solid colors will help make the subject stand out (important if the point is to highlight a product).
- . Be sure to use proper lighting.
- . Keep the camera focused - blurry images are a sure turnoff.
- . Invest in good editing software.

Many other tips and tricks for creating streaming video can be found at Streaming Media World (<http://streamingmediaworld.com/video/tutor/>). Using these types of suggestions can help to prevent presentations that are poorly done and creating a turnoff for the viewer or potential investor.

Streaming video can help introduce a venture's products or services in a way that exceeds customer expectations. They can be used to educate buyers of products in their use, to introduce a new product or service, to update a client about important news, or to allow real-time interaction with customers or clients in a way that encourages brand loyalty. The use of this technology does not have to be costly or difficult to understand. Hopefully this article has provided a starting point encouraging the reader to further explore how streaming video can become a means of improving customer/client communications and profitability.

Sources:

1. Baradell, S. (November 20, 2007). Simple steps for adding multimedia to your PR program. Retrieved on November 21, 2008 from http://www.mpdailyfix.com/2007/11/four_tips_for_adding_multimedi.html
2. Detty, T. (2007). Internet streaming video the best online marketing tool.

Retrieved on November 21, 2008 from

<http://www.articlesbase.com/advertising-articles/Internet-streaming-video-the-best-online-marketing-tool-188473.html>

3. Latchford, L. (2008). Using online video boosts your affiliate marketing profits. Retrieved on November 21, 2008 from <http://majestictech.com/how-to-advertise-on-craigslist/using-online-video-boosts-your-affiliate-marketing-profits/>

4. Laycock, J. (November 20, 2007). Are you integrating multimedia into your site yet? Retrieved on November 21, 2008 from <http://www.searchengineguide.com/jennifer-laycock/are-you-integrating-multimedia-into-your.php>

5. Lipsman, A. (2008). YouTube Draws 5 Billion U.S. Online Video Views in July 2008. comScore Press Release. Retrieved on November 21, 2008 from <http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=2444>

6. Madden, M. (July 25, 2007). Online video. Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved on November 21, 2008 from http://www.pewInternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Online_Video_2007.pdf

7. Segal, N. (July 21, 2001). Creating quality streaming video. Retrieved on November 21, 2008 from <http://smw.Internet.com/video/tutor/videotips/>

5.3

Blogging for business: How the blogosphere has changed the face of the Internet and created a small business marketing phenomenon

Author: Latia White

If you are on the Internet you have probably seen a blog on the websites you have visited. Even if you did not click to see where it would take you, you have probably seen that word numerous times as you have surfed the web. In just a few short years, blogging has risen from an unknown form of communication to one where millions of people use it on a daily basis.

What exactly is a blog and the blogosphere? Just in case you have not caught on to one of the fastest growing forms of social media, here is a simple explanation. A blog is a web site (as it is on the Internet) that allows two-way communication between the author and its readers. The blogosphere is the network that connects these millions of blogs. Blogs are usually written in a conversational format that is easy to read and engaging to the audience. There is no structured format that the blog needs to take, but many of the best blogs do have the conversational tone in common. The important thing to remember about blogging, is that you need to find out what works best for your and your readers. As for what you can write about there is no limit to what can be blogged. The topics are limitless. If you can think it, you can blog it.

Smart small businesses owners (including corporations) are catching on to how blogs can help benefit their venture. They are beginning to see that blogging can be a powerful tool for connecting with current and potential customers.

According to MarketingSherpa (<http://www.marketingsherpa.com>), blogging is ranked fourth among the best marketing tools to generate sales. If you are not yet blogging, you might want to reconsider. Let's further examine how blogging can be beneficial to your business.

If you have a blog on your website and it includes key words and phrases, your business's website can move to the top of many search engines. Being at the top of the search pages can lead to increased exposure to the products and services your business is offering. The blog itself can be a tool that will attract new customers to you and it can help keep the customers you already have. By blogging consistently and in a friendly format, you can give your business the human element that many customers appreciate. Because readers are able to leave comments, you have also opened up your business to being viewed by customers as one that is approachable. When customers feel a connection with a business, they are more likely to become loyal to the products or services of that business.

If your blog is established and you have a good following, you can use your blog for gathering customer feedback about products or services you offer. Your blog has given you instant access to a focus group. This focus group can help you make improvements on existing products or can help you get feedback on new products you are considering. Talk about cost effective. No longer will you have to spend the time or money in gathering people to evaluate your products; you have these individuals at your disposal all because of your blog.

If used properly blogs can be just as effective in helping you grow your business, meet organizational goals and build your brand. With the amount of exposure a blog can bring, you can connect with your target market and communicate how your business stands apart from the competition. With other forms of marketing you may spend thousands of dollars for a limited amount of exposure to your targeted area. With the blog, the exposure you receive is unlimited, as the Internet is open 24 hours a day 365 days a year; and your blog is not removed unless you decided to stop blogging.

If you have not explored this media as way to reach out to your customers, now is the time. The power of the blog is just being realized by many businesses. You get lots of bang for your buck as the blog can be started with little or no money. The exposure a blog can bring to your business far outweighs the cost of starting one. The great thing about them is that there is no right or wrong way to blog; but as with any tool, it must be used properly and this does require planning on your part. The power of the blog for your business is only limited to your imagination and creativity.

5.4

Tools for building powerful opt-in email lists and communicating with your customers

Author: Ernest Hays

Let's look at some tools for building powerful communication paths with your customers. An opt-in email list is a distributed email to those who want to participate in your service, products or simply want to receive information from you on a regular basis. Note the keyword here is "want". There is a huge difference between people's inbox filling up with unwanted email and those who have voluntarily signed up with your organization to receive your emails. Anyone who signs up to receive your information is pre-qualified for your goods and services. These subscribers desire to hear about your sales, special offers, deadlines and promotions. It is practically free advertising since the only cost is your time to produce the material used in the email. Email list subscribers are the ones who make up your opt-in list. Somewhere along the way they have been prompted to agree to sign on to your list and have done so willingly. All you have to do is make sure the information you send them is valid and valuable so they will continue to want your information regularly. Here are a few ways to help grow your list.

If you are selling a service or a product via the Internet, it is best to always ask the customer to sign on for more special values from your company. You can do this through a checkout page when they actually purchase from you, or you can have an "include" box posted on various pages of your website. Many web pages are accessible via search engines. This is a great place to put an opt-in

check box. If they are searching for a specific item and come across your page, then you want to allow them to be able to hear from you regarding that product. You can also create instant incentives on these pages. Use tools such as “check for more information – a new sale is about to begin”. This is one way to help the potential customer become one of your regular email constituents.

There are several tools that can optimize the list being created by your “volunteers”. First, make sure you are sending them a regularly scheduled newsletter. Keep them informed and set the stage for a continual desire for them to want more. Don’t be afraid to give away something. Making free offers, without any strings, gives your customers a feeling that they are glad they signed on with you. Don’t be too stingy or greedy by attaching a sale to everything. Create an open forum or blog to help people communicate about your product or service and express their experiences. This offers a feeling of community for them to be a part of. Always provide content that is of value and high quality. Make sure your proofreader is professional. The value of your organization is quickly swayed by less than perfect, non-conclusive, or even irrelevant content. Offering valuable articles of information that centers on your product or service will prompt your users to acknowledge they made a good choice by signing on with you. In turn, this will actually cause them to forward your information to others, making them look good, and providing an option for new people to sign on.

Your email list is also used to invite friends of those already signed on. You can offer incentives to help them bring in new customers for you. It is almost like paying a very small commission, but much less than one to a sales person! The more your list grows the more captured customers you have. Many people will eventually want to opt out of your list. It is inevitable. But, you can always utilize another tool to help them stay around for a while longer. Simply utilize

an electronic coupon giving them a discount or some other reason to stay on for a limited period of time. This way they aren't burdened by an "eternal" relationship, but instead feel it's worth it to stick around for another 6 weeks or 6 months.

It is still important to know why someone is leaving so that you can help to avoid this situation if you can. Allow for feedback concerning your product or service. Give them "gripe space". But don't just wait until they're ready to leave to ask their opinion. Make sure you include an option for feedback regularly in all your scheduled publications. Allowing for two-way conversation via email or a corporate blog will give the end user a feeling of power and input into your organization. This gives them an identity with you and a connection that is tougher to break if something beyond your control goes awry or they simply desire an improvement or enhancement to your product or service that you haven't realized as of yet. Let your customers tell you how you can improve! Oh yes, be sure to tell them they are signed up with a "private" list and that any information regarding them will not be disclosed or resold to any other organization.

Remember, an opt-in business list is available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

5.5

Using free ebooks, tips booklets, and other information pieces to establish your expertise and freely spread your message

Author: Fred_Tiess

Quid pro quo in Latin translates to “something for something.” So how exactly does giving away something benefit you, the marketer of a service or product? Quite simply, people like the concept of “something for nothing” better. However, what they do not realize is that they are giving the marketer something in return -- strategic information. This article will examine the strategies that may be used to promote or extend an idea, product, service or altruistic goal.

Extending your thoughts or ideas into an E-book is cost effective and relatively easy. If you have information or data that may be valuable to another person you may want to consider using that information to advance your business. Even if you are not the best authority on the subject, or if you lack the fluidity of authorship, you or your organization can still produce a valuable published work. The key to any endeavor of this nature is the collaborative efforts of individuals to promote the publication's appeal to potential clients or customers.

Have you ever seen an advertisement that differentiates its product from others by enticing the customer with a free instructional pamphlet? Why did they offer

that information for free, as opposed to selling it? The reason probably was to promote a product without having to reduce or match the market price of the product. If you market a product that does not have a great deal of market price variance, developing an E-book might be the strategy that draws the customer in. Perhaps you offer a service that caters to a particular segment of a market. Producing an E-book or electronic pamphlet that helps your client attract potential customers through information will generally, in turn, help you to promote your client's business.

Perhaps you have developed a formula or intellectual asset that solves a current socioeconomic problem. Producing an E-book may allow your authority some validation by those who need the problem solved. Those individuals are likely to share the E-book with others if you provide for this activity in your publication. A viral publication can be easily spread, and in some cases you, the publisher, can collect data on all of those individuals who possess your E-book. In a specialty-oriented market, like hydroponics (growing fruits or vegetables in water and minerals as opposed to dirt) an entrepreneur can promote an idea, extend the market and gather a list of potential clients for future sales. He or she can reap the benefits of the seeds that they had sown by targeting the growing pool of readers, with strategic marketing. Software programs like e Book Pro can help you achieve those increased sale goals. See <http://www.ebookpro.com> for an example.

Finally if your desire is to promote a worthy cause, raise charitable funds or simply help an organization promote their message, producing an E-book might just be the gift that they need. Our culture is prosperous in how we consistently advance the needs of others over individual gain. If you are an authority on a given subject matter and are willing to invest in promoting a charitable campaign, then producing an E-book may fill a void. A void that may fill that

organization's promotional need, and in turn, fill one's personal void when challenged by a conviction of commitment: something for something.

Sources:

1. Securely package your web site, product brochure or ebook in a single executable for easy distribution.
<http://www.x2net.com/webcompiler/index.htm>
2. How to Guide: <http://www.ebook-site.com>
3. Service Provider: <http://ebook.generatorsoftware.com>

6.1

Evolving technologies make high quality sign production faster, cheaper, and more flexible than ever before

Author: Jon Lawrie

The days of the hand lettered business sign are coming to a close. Multicolored banners, displays, site signs, and vehicle appliqués are easy to design and inexpensive to produce. Their use in advertising is only limited by the imagination of the business owner. They are inexpensive and may be purchased from any of the thousands of rapid production sign businesses across the country. FastSigns or Signarama franchises can be found in every major city; over \$10 billion of digital signs are sold every year (<http://www.fastsigns.com>, <http://www.signarama.com>).

A business can use a variety of Adobe, Corel or Microsoft programs to design their own graphic or work with a graphic designer to produce a concept ready for printing. Sign shops have thousands of royalty free images for customers to use and a sales consultant will assist in producing designs for an entire promotion. Full color graphics can be transferred to a number of materials suitable for both indoor and outdoor use. Digital images and text are used extensively for trade shows and exhibits; rapid printing supports last minute promotion of a new product.

The utility and variety of digitally printed signage can be demonstrated during a short drive through a business park or strip mall: an abundance of multicolored

site and window signs, banners, printed awnings, and illuminated signs can be seen. Appliqués are attached to windows and doors and directional signs guide the way to main entrances. Point of sale signs and additional banners have been placed inside the shops. Even the company vehicle outside may have been turned into a sign!

Small foam board signs with a printed film attached cost less than \$30. These types of films can also be attached to plastic, metal, laminate or acrylic material and are used extensively for outdoor site signage. They are frequently used for curb signs, directional signs and “A frames”. They can cost upwards to \$90 depending on size and material.

Next to site signage, banner signs are the most popular type of business signs produced. Banner signs are flexible, portable and can be printed on a variety of media including vinyl, nylon, and polyester. Nylon banners are weather resistant and are used in permanent outdoor applications. The cost of banner signs range from \$100 to \$400 depending on size and material. Banner displays can be easily rolled and transported for exhibition or trade show use.

One of the most eye catching uses of digital signs is vehicle appliqués. Small magnetic vehicle signs start at about \$70 a pair; a decorated van can range from \$1,000 to \$6,000 depending on the amount of coverage and complexity of the design. Vivid colors and graphics dramatically promote the company on the road and when parked at the place of business (www.fastsigns.com/241).

7.1

Gaining synergies from multiple marketing communications channels

Author: Ernest Hays

Small entrepreneurial businesses have a great opportunity to garner sufficient market information and use it in ways that larger, well established businesses cannot. Once the vision is cast and the business has fulfilled that vision to a greater success, the die is cast as far as necessitating new and varied marketing channels for growth. In that, it does not mean there is no growth, nor any need for multi-channel marketing. It simply means a large business has established itself as a market and therefore is more concerned about relaying it's main message over and again to the core of its constituency that it has created. Product loyalty is the result of long term branding and complete marketing success. This would seem to be the ultimate goal for any established business in order to gain market share and dominate their segment. Traditionally, firms have used tried and true forms of marketing for years: mainly print, radio, and television.

But, what does it mean to gain synergy from multiple marketing communication channels? First we need to realize that marketing channels have changed dramatically in the past decade. Observance and acceptance of newer technologies for marketing have driven a vast array of new methods and approaches to getting the message out regarding your product or service. In addition to the traditional marketing channels mentioned above, we can now add the Internet and all its various forms of expression to the mix, as well as other electronic and not so subtle devices, such as blimps.

The Internet relies heavily on audience participation. So, no matter if you are prone to use a web page, email, blogging or podcasts, the customer is the one who initializes the relay of information to their own environment. On the other hand, everyday events like simply driving down the road, now takes on greater exposure to marketing channels like never before. Billboards, skywriters, painted cars, vans, trucks, and buses, as well as advertising on buildings, and even park benches, cover the landscape as you travel to your destination. There is no way to escape the observance in some form or another of massive multi-channel marketing every where you turn.

The challenge for the small entrepreneurial business is not as daunting as it may seem. The environment for any startup, bootstrap or otherwise virgin business, is to gain acceptance on a small scale so as to prove its viability and then grow from that point. Once acceptance at a relative minute level is obtained, new possibilities for marketing synergy are made available. Which one to start with is the question? Direct mail, call centers, email blasts and other web based marketing channels can give the new enterprise an edge due to relative low costs and easily managed and flexible content for fast, smooth adjustments to their message. Larger firms may find it much tougher to manage the many types and forms multi-channel marketing provides. They simply cannot get all their marketing muscle to move as quickly in the newer electronic market as the smaller organization. Also, many larger companies have customers who are accustomed to seeing and/or hearing about the product to which they are loyal in only certain fashions. If, for example, a long time client for Sears is bombarded with email from Sears, they may begin to wane in their loyalty as they see Sears now as an intrusion to their privacy and becoming desperate for customers. Large companies are usually geared towards marketing in only certain channels. They risk the chance of contradicting themselves by trying to use various channel marketing techniques which may overlap due to varying lengths of

processing and deadlines. The smaller enterprise can change quickly with messages targeted to specific portions of the entire market, just to capture or inform a specific delegation, then move on to another marketing channel as part of an overall strategy to penetrate a variety of customer bases.

This type of elastic marketing for multiple channel access is what gives the entrepreneurial enterprise a cutting edge to capture the desired segment of clientele to launch and grow the organization. Careful consideration and planning as to which channels, how long to use each one, as well as which one meets the audience wanting to be reached, has to be included in the inertia of multi-channel marketing.

7.2

Press Kits: What They Are and How to Use Them

Author: Evan Bradford

To some, the term “press kits,” also sometimes referred to as “media kits,” might be unfamiliar. However, it is important to understand what they are and why you need them, as they can prove to be vitally important to the success of a business venture.

Essentially, a press kit for a company can be likened to a resume. The basic idea behind it is to act as a marketing medium for a company and to answer questions that the media or potential clients or investors may have. Just as with any other marketing plan, the goal is to generate enough attention that the reader will contact the business or owner for more information. It is fairly obvious why a business would want investors and clients, but media attention can often be overlooked. The fact is, the press has the power to generate a lot of positive publicity for a business, and even a small mention in a magazine or on the radio can propel a business to the next level.

There are many different components that can be included in a press kit, some of which depend on the intended audience. But in general it is intended to be a compilation of various aspects of a company; the first to include is a letter of introduction. This should be a quick summary of the business and an explanation as to why the reader should bother looking at the rest of the kit. The important thing to remember here is that this letter will make the initial

impression and be the attention grabber. It needs to sell the company to the reader; otherwise, they will not be interested. Also be sure to include contact information.

The second item to include is a brief history of the company. Background information is often useful, such as an outline that covers its inception to its current status, relevant achievements and awards and biographical information on the company's officers, owners, and managers. The important thing to remember here is not to get carried away with these biographies; only include pertinent information that is related to the company and what is being pitched by the press kit. Getting too longwinded with irrelevant information will quickly lose the reader's attention.

It is also a good idea to include some information about the products and/or services that the company offers. Fact sheets or company brochures are often good additions. Also, reviews or articles that have been published about your company or products can add appeal. However, it is important to note that it is not a good idea to include every article ever written about the company. Keep any of these additions recent and be selective. It is good to let your targets know that other members of the media are interested in what the company is doing, but the aim of the press kit is to get them interested enough to find out more about the company. They may not want to write about it if it has already been mentioned everywhere else.

There are many other items that can be included in a press kit. Photos and video can be welcoming additions, such as a CD of high quality JPEG files, including the company's logo. The important things to remember are that the kit needs to be neat, organized, professional, visually appealing, and not contain irrelevant

information. It is also essential to be creative and clever and do something to make the press kit unique in order to stand out.

Aside from standing out, another key factor to generating positive results from a press kit is sending it to the right person. Do some homework when sending a press kit to a publication to make sure that you send it to the person who writes about subjects relevant to your company. Also, a follow up call will confirm that the desired recipient received the kit and also provide an excellent opportunity for them to ask any questions. In doing this, you can start building relationships with editors, which can prove to be essential for future media exposure.

One last thing to mention about press kits relates to the different mediums through which they can be distributed. Obviously, there is the physical route, but as with almost everything else, it is becoming increasingly popular to distribute them electronically over the Internet. These types of kits are often appropriately referred to as “electronic press kits,” or “EPKs.” One of the most effective methods of online distribution is to set up an electronic press room on your company’s website and email members of the media a press release that contains a link to this site. Just remember to paste any information into the body of the email, as most of them probably will not open attachments from senders they don’t know.

With a carefully planned strategy of distributing both paper and electronic press kits, your company can easily be skyrocketed to a new level of success. As with any other marketing plan, make sure to define your target audience and then present your company to them in a unique and interesting manner.

8.1

“It’s a Date”: Using the marketing calendar to plan promotions year-round

Author: Carrie House

Birthdays, Anniversaries, Meetings, Seminars, Lunch Dates...how do we remember any of them? More than likely, you use a calendar of some sort to keep your business and social events fresh in your mind. Whether you use the traditional spiral bound wall calendar, a small desk calendar, or an electronic PDA, you keep track of important events. If you’re a business owner, you probably have more than one calendar, maybe one for each department. And whether you have a large or a small sales and marketing department, a calendar can help organize promotional events as well.

Calendars are a simple way to organize multiple marketing campaigns and promotions in a company. Some promotions are seasonal; some run each quarter. Some campaigns continue the entire length of the year. Either way, keeping them organized is half the battle. The other half of the battle is making your sales team aware of the marketing events. Both can be solved by using a colorful and effective marketing calendar.

A marketing calendar can be as simple as an excel spreadsheet:

- . Each column can be labeled according to different methods of advertising: Email Campaigns, Broadcast Voice Mail, Web Banners, Direct Mailing, Newspaper Placements, Radio Spots, Luncheons, Monthly Promotions, Seasonal Campaigns, etc.
- . Each coordinating row can be labeled with dates of the month of when each marketing project begins and ends.
- . A separate tab can be used for each month as well to further go in depth about the details of a certain promotion... where Sales Reps can pick up copies of the magazine, if there are any give-a-way items, links to order extra coupon books, etc.

Often Sales Reps work on a two or three month out calendar so they need to know what promotions are happening months from now. Marketing calendars provide a structured way for Reps to see what programs will be launching.

Another key to the calendar is color, lots of color. By color-coding each of the methods of advertising, a Rep or Manager can easily see what the company is doing to promote itself and increase sales at any given time. It's simple and all of your employees can use it from work or at home. If you have a company with several regions and divisions, spreadsheets can be set up by these markets so that everyone in the company can see what's happening in marketing across the board.

These calendars also prove useful to sales managers and even business owners because they can quickly see where no marketing efforts exist – an opportunity to do another campaign or promotion. If a high rate of sales leads increased

during a specific time, managers can see what promotions were occurring at the time to see how effective the program was. By adding a column for cost on the calendar, each advertising event can be assigned a cost. This not only makes it easier for those employees who place orders for promotional materials, but these marketing calendars are a quick and simple way for senior level managers to gauge ROI based on marketing activities as well.

Marketing calendars will make everyone's job functions easier - from placing orders to gauging how cost-effective a campaign was, to comparing the amount of sales leads gained during a certain time period to other divisions in your company, making you aware of their own marketing efforts. Calendar templates are easy to set up and simple for others to use. They are colorful and organized and keep all levels of employees within an organization informed. Marketing efforts are now able to be quantified and structured in a timely fashion with a marketing calendar. It's a date!!

For template ideas for your new marketing calendar, go to <http://www.marketing.about.com>

8.2

Pre-sale Communications

Author: WC Godfrey

There are five customers in the store preparing to make a purchase and we have one person calling in on the phone. The customer on the phone represents a purchase as well and therefore requires proper customer service. What will be the outcome if we have to place this customer on hold? It depends on how the customer perceives his time is being used.

There are some key steps that you should follow before placing a customer on hold: 1. Ask the caller's permission before placing them on hold; 2. Provide them with the benefits of being placed on hold; 3. Wait for a response- if they say no, offer to call them back and give a time frame; 4. And thank customers for holding after you return to the line.¹ But what are we going to do with the customer while they are on hold?

The customer on hold is a potential buyer that we want to impress. As long as we can keep their attention without frustrating them or boring them, we have an engaged audience. One Internet business that sells custom on-hold messages stated that "You have your callers' complete attention at what is virtually the point of sale. Many of your waiting callers have their pens poised, their order books open, they want to know how you can help them, *SO LET'S TELL THEM.*"² The most popular on-hold messages today include music or

background radio. While researching several companies³ that provide these types of messages, it was clearly pointed out that there are legal liabilities associated with these types of venues, namely lawsuits and licensing fees associated with copyrights and royalties.

If you have the time and some money, you will probably want to customize all your on-hold messages to avoid the liabilities. One company⁴ suggests that the following items should be included in an on-hold message: broad information about your company, your company's web site address, news about upcoming events such as discounts and other deals and information about special products and services. To avoid the boredom of just words, we could entertain the customer with some background music that we have created and recorded on our own or come up with a special jingle that we should copyright and use as background music.

Using silence is not acceptable when a customer is on-hold and neither is it a good practice to allow general advertising announcement because you could be giving away dollars to your direct or indirect competitors. The ultimate goal is to use this on-hold time to create a demand for more of our products and services.

Sources:

1. <http://www.wvbep.org/bep/New/CServiceManual/page5.htm>
2. <http://www.customhold.com>
3. http://www.easyonhold.com/how_to_use_music_on_hold_legally.php
4. http://www.appscorp.net/place_calls_on_hold.asp
5. http://www.soundresultsonhold.com/on_hold_demo.html

6. <http://www.customercareonhold.com/>
7. <http://www.vendorseek.com/inform-your-customers-with-on-hold-messages.asp>

8.3

Post-sale Communications: It's the little things you do: The power of saying "thank you," following up, and ensuring that customers are happy, *after* the sale

Author: Tasheenia Bennett

We were always told to keep our business relationships professional and never to get personally involved with our clients. But what would you say if I told you there is a professional way of being personal? Doesn't make much sense, does it? The most important, fairly simple task that we can do as professionals is to maintain a personal relationship with everyone we come in contact with. This doesn't just mean people who have bought or used our products and/or services, otherwise known as past clients. Everyone is a prospective client or they know someone who is.

There are many ways to achieve this personal relationship. Each client or prospective client is different so you need to pay particular attention to their needs and wants. As soon as you meet or encounter someone new, you should begin to take mental notes on everything they say or do. This will allow you to gather useful information that can be used when you need to add that personal touch during successful follow up. We should never rely on our memory so be sure to document your notes as soon as possible.

Post cards, thank you notes, letters, newsletters, text messages and emails are examples of how to follow up. Sending a newsletter containing information that

your client or customer is interested in makes them feel like you know them. Writing a handwritten note or post card shows them that they are important enough to receive personal attention. The use of text messaging and email can be used only for those who would prefer this type of communication because it doesn't particularly show personalization. Either follow up method you chose should be consistent. You can hire agencies or even set up an automatic response program for follow up. The benefits far outweigh any reason or excuse why you can't make the time to follow up.

Marketing for new business can be quite expensive so why not save money by using past clients? You have already invested time and money in obtaining their business and hopefully have gained their trust and commitment. You will be able to learn from your past clients how to improve your services by obtaining their feedback during your follow up. This technique will not only help you to make changes in your business, but will allow the clients to be a part of your business. It lets them know that they are appreciated and that their opinion counts. *Harvard Business Review* reported that companies could increase profits by up to 85% simply by decreasing customer defections by 5%. Customer retention is about the most important thing your company can do.

An appropriate, personalized, follow up program will not only generate repeat business but also referrals. As long as you have provided a happy and fulfilling service to your clients, they will tell their family and friends about their experience. Word of mouth advertisement is free and generates more business than any other marketing technique or method a business can use. It is so powerful that it can make or break your business. Following up and keeping in contact with your clients and customers will also make it harder for competitors to take them away.

A simple smile or verbal thank you will also instill the feeling of happiness. Saying thank you doesn't have to be done in person, but can be accomplished by a personal note or letter. It is important to thank your clients for their business and their time. Offer them a reason to come back and do business with you in the future and offer them something in return. Research shows that 68% of customers that don't return to a business say that the business never contacted them. Do what ever it takes to let them know and make them feel appreciated and valued. Maya Angelou says it best, "People will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you make them feel."

8.4

The power of identity systems in small business marketing

Author: Mike Rabinowitz

Identity systems encompass the look and feel of your company as it is presented to the world. The common tools of establishing an identity system include logos, letterhead, business cards and most of your marketing material such as brochures and signs. The importance of a sound identity system is paramount as the old saying goes, “Image is everything”. Another common old adage comes to mind, “You never get a second chance at a first impression”. When you present your business card to a potential client you are presenting your firm’s image in that little 2 inch by 4 inch billboard. Is it printed on quality paper? Is it visually appealing? Does it display a well thought out company logo? If not, there is a good chance it will end up as some sort of unidentifiable cardboard lump stuck to the lint door of a laundry machine. A well made business card won’t necessarily land you the deal or the client but it won’t hurt you either.

When you are attempting to raise money from some venture capitalist, you want to look like you belong in the league in which you are playing. Your well honed “elevator pitch” may have got your foot in the door but your well written business plan and marketing materials presented with high quality graphics will greatly enhance your ability to land the deal.

Your identity system is your brand. When investors, customers and even competitors think of your company, they usually do not imagine your

smiling face. When they think of your company, they usually visualize your brand or logo. For example, if I was to flash a photo of Steve Jobs to a hundred strangers on the street, I believe it is safe to assume the percentage of people that would know who he is or what company he represents would be quite low. Now, flash an image of Apple's logo. That simple outline of an apple with a bite taken out of it and I'm fairly confident the recognition rate would be much, much higher.

Now you are in business and you want to keep and grow your client base. If you have a well thought out and designed identity system, your company will come to the minds of current and potential clients and this will help in growing your business. This is why many firms will wage fierce, multi-million dollar campaigns to protect their image or logo. Coca Cola, for example protects its logo globally. Put a familiar "swoop" on your product and a well paid team of attorneys from Nike will be at your door in no time.

Your brand can separate or differentiate you from your competitors. If you are in a highly competitive field with very little to separate you from the rest of the pack, your brand may be the only think that tilts the scales in your favor. It could be as simple as creating a funny or interesting logo that sticks in the minds of customers or, if you are a newer firm, your brand can make you look like a long established, well run firm that assures clients that yours is a firm they can trust.

Your business will always be engaged in a marketing campaign whether it is a full blown advertising blitz, simple mailers dropped into mail boxes or the design of your website. In all facets of marketing your identity system, through your marketing materials, logo or even your business cards, is how you present yourself to your clients. Its use is important in how you will attract new business, raise capital or even sell your company and retire to the Bahamas one day.

9.1

The Growing Reach of Small Business: How you can buy, sell, and partner around the world

Author: Tice Tansil

Only a little over a decade and a half ago it was much more difficult to do business globally for small businesses. Large corporations could fund establishing offices in different countries to distribute products and services from the home country. They could also hire product buyers to travel the world finding new products to offer. But small businesses were at a disadvantage to fund such investments.

The Internet is the largest game-changer for small business on a global scale. Now a small business owner can reach customers around the world as they search on their computer. A website costing only a few hundred dollars to setup and maintain annually has the potential to sell to people all over the world. International suppliers can also be reached easily over the Internet, which would previously involve more inefficient means such as international travel and communications by phone, fax, and mail service.

The price of international phone calls has also fallen dramatically in recent years and phone calls can also be made inexpensively internationally by services such as Skype. Even though much business is done entirely over the Internet, many customers or suppliers will do business by phone call even if they locate a business over the Internet.

Websites such as <http://AliBaba.com> and <http://GlobalSources.com> bring together international suppliers like manufacturers and businesses like retailers and importers. This works both ways. A small business can use the resources to locate suppliers and can post products they offer to reach partners in other countries. A small business looking for partners internationally can also use the web to directly contact appropriate partners like retailers, importers and wholesalers in other countries. EBay and Google Product Search are two Internet resources for posting products for sale so shoppers all over the world can find them. Websites like <http://Elance.com> are for sales of services, often internationally. A small business which offers services like programming, design, writing and such can offer their services there or bid on posted jobs and find international customers for their services. Likewise a small business can use a site like Elance to buy services like programming from businesses in other countries and take advantage of cost savings.

Luckily for those of us able to read this, English is the international language of business. By doing business in English you can reach the largest, most affluent groups of customers worldwide. Most foreign suppliers will be able to do business in English by having at least one person on staff proficient enough in the language to conduct business. One must keep in mind that customers and contacts who speak English, but not as a primary language may have difficulty with some words and phrases, so be aware of this when you communicate.

Some effort invested into translation with language conversion tools like those offered by Google or by hiring language translation companies can pay off. You may not need to invest in building a complete website in a language beyond English, but having the proper foreign language keywords can help with search engine results for people searching the Internet in other languages. Or try having just a simple webpage or two about your company, policies, and

products or services translated into other languages can help reach customers that speak only or primarily that language.

Paying attention to aspects such as the extreme time zone differences in communicating with customers and suppliers around the world and with the customs and language style of the different nationalities is important.

A drawback to the increased connections and choices brought by the Internet is that customers have easier access to competitors as well. Where as in the past a small business might be one of a few competitors serving a market area, or the only one to get a catalog or direct marketing advertising message to a customer for a non-local purchase, with the Internet, the competition is only a few clicks away. Customers may choose based on price and will often prefer businesses that are located at least in their same country. But there are strategies that small business can choose to lead to success even in the face of worldwide competition. By focusing on a niche, both in target market and in products or services offered, they will limit the number of competitors they face. Also, investing the effort and expense into these areas of business will increase the number of times a customer chooses you over the competition: speed of shipping, response time to customer inquiries, images, video, detailed descriptions and testimonials.

International business can often be a selling point in itself. Many customers will find something exciting and appealing in receiving something from a distant country. While some countries have somewhat of a negative aspect to their exported goods such as those 'Made in China', other countries bring a unique appeal such as a fashion item from Europe, a handmade item from an exotic land like Indonesia or Kenya, or even from a place non-traditional...to the usual offerings such as bottle of wine from Australia standing out from those by

domestic or European producers.

Small business is usually greatly affected by the economic situation in which it does business. Economic fluctuation in the city it is located or even neighborhood in which a small business is located would often lead to a boom or bust of the business. With the global reach of small business now, a business can be protected against economic downturns in a specific country or area and take advantage of growing economies on the other side of the world by selling to newly affluent customers in India and China.

Currency fluctuations also have varying impacts on global business. When the dollar declines in value, imports become more expensive so products from international suppliers will be affected negatively. However, a declining dollar leads to increased exports, as customers in other countries find their money goes further to purchase items priced in dollars.

The transportation costs of an item or service must also be considered. The increasing cost of fuel, which has a smaller effect on doing business locally, can add greatly to the freight transportation costs of inbound and outbound shipments for global business. Lightweight and small merchandise is much less expensive to have imported from global suppliers and distributed to international customers. Some merchandise may only work effectively 'one way.' Items that are large and heavy like furniture may need to be imported in bulk by sea with a shipping container, as it would not be worthwhile ship these items individually to customers in other countries. Even with products of this type, there still may be ways to make it work through global partnerships.

Furniture could be designed by a small business here in this country, manufactured in a foreign country and then shipped by the container load to retail partners in other countries, such as stores buying the furniture in bulk at

wholesale rates. Some products or services can be distributed digitally over the Internet, like E-books, digital music, or services able to be provided through digital means like software programming or design services so that customers can quickly and easily receive their purchase.

Small businesses shipping or receiving physical goods will also find advantages and disadvantages to the different delivery service options. A courier service such as Fed-Ex, UPS, and DHL can be very expensive, even for small packages, but the service is often very quick, taking even as little as a day or two to cross the globe. International airmail service through the postal system is usually the cheapest way to transport a package, especially with small ones. The mail service is usually slower than courier services, although options like Express Mail will average around a week for a rate usually less than courier services. Less than a decade ago the mail service between countries was often unreliable with some packages being delayed for weeks without reason or even lost or stolen from the mail.

In recent years the mail service has greatly improved between most countries, although some areas like Eastern Europe or third world countries will often have more unreliable mail service. If there is a problem with a shipment, the postal service can often take many days or weeks, to get word back from the postal system of the country a package was shipped to - and often that information will be lacking.

The communications with courier services such as Fed-Ex and DHL are usually much better so high value or high risk shipments are better suited through the couriers even if the postal service offers insurance and package tracking as an option. Delays by customs offices are greatly reduced when using the courier services, but the customs brokerage fees will often be higher with couriers when

compared to international mail service.

One of the increased risks of doing business globally is fraud. For payments by credit card in the United States, the credit card company will offer an address verification service that verifies if the billing address submitted on an order matches what the credit card company has on file. This greatly reduces the risk of fraud; however, address verification is not an option on cardholders located in most other countries around the world. A phone call to a customer or their bank or credit card company is a simple step to double check a suspicious domestic order but is much more involved with an international order due to time zone differences, language barriers and such. International orders will often require more proofing to weed out fraudulent orders.

Many international customers will have Visa, MasterCard, or even American Express as their credit or debit cards so payment is often almost effortless. The credit card company will perform a currency conversion for a small fee, deducting the amount from the cardholder in their home currency at the current exchange rate and transferring payment to the business in their own currency. Payments from customers can also be made internationally by bank wire transfer, although this often involves added expense and effort over other payment methods, or can be made through a service such as Paypal or through an international money order which can be purchased at many foreign banks or post offices in U.S. dollars and sent through the mail.

Payment to international suppliers can also be a risk. Many will accept payment by credit card or Paypal which will offer some degree of protection against fraud or through an escrow service for even more protection. But many international suppliers will want payment by bank wire transfer, which offers little protection to a business that sends money to another business. A business must be cautious about wiring money to a supplier in another country in advance for goods they will ship, even though this is what many international partners will insist on.

Don't risk more money on a single transaction with a supplier than one can afford to lose and if possible, keep initial orders small and build up if the supplier is proven trustworthy. Payment through a Letter of Credit with a bank can be safer than a standard wire transfer, but the fees and effort involved make it usually only worthwhile on very large transactions.

The future points to even more potential partners and consumers coming online and an increased ease of doing business internationally. As infrastructure continues to improve in developing countries, more and more consumers and suppliers will be increasing their presence online as they look to do business. As more international business takes place even between developed countries, freight delivery systems and payment transfer methods will continue to improve. If a business is careful to minimize the disadvantages of the globally connected business environment, they may find great success venturing virtually beyond their borders.

9.2

Who's your dance partner? Finding and working with other entrepreneurs to create productive and profitable joint marketing ventures

Author: D Fey

In the business of real estate, the mantra is “location, location, location.” For new businesses the mantra would have to be networking, networking, networking. Who you know and how you interact with them can have an enormous impact on your business. It is, therefore, essential to know how to locate other entrepreneurs, and how to develop marketing ventures that are profitable. There is no one best area to find other entrepreneurs with which to develop business relationships; however, a good place to start is the local Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to a variety of business functions that the local Chamber provides to members, there is also the opportunity to join networking groups. These groups are often defined by the various ways in which a business itself would be defined, such as type, services offered, area served or company size. Each Chamber may have its own type of groups and classifications but the rule seems to be that the members of the groups are limited by numbers of direct competitors allowed in each, i.e. one realtor, one cleaning service, etc. This protects the members from competing against each other directly and encourages members to develop relationships with which to extend their business's reach.

Along the same line is the local merchant associations which, like the Chamber encourage and foster businesses working together for the benefit of the area. Professional networking groups such as Business Network International tend to be small and regulated. BNI is a very proactive national organization and members are required to work together in their chapter on various projects and meetings. All of these organizations have regular meetings in which functions, introductions and interactions take place. Normally the meetings are very structured and productive.

Aside from the few mentioned here, a wide range of professional trade associations and trade groups exist where members can meet other professionals from their area. The Internet is also home to several business networking website organizations where a business owner could meet and develop a relationship with another member. The most popular are: LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>), Spoke (<http://www.spoke.com>) and Jigsaw (<http://www.jigsaw.com>). All three of these networks have screening tools in place to ensure members are credible. In addition to business specific networking groups there are also Internet social networking groups exist such as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) and MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>) where business are able to connect with other members and form a variety of relationships.

Another setting in which to meet entrepreneurs are incubation centers that many cities or counties set up for start up businesses. Some are also operated by non profits or private business segments and normally consist of small facilities located in a much larger building connected by a central entrance and meeting center. The incubator has a staff which assists the business members in various functions by helping them interact by utilizing each others special disciplines. Some entrepreneurs are able to utilize the services and relationship of their

vendors. This is highly dependent on the type of business and the vendors that are used. The last area and many times the most fruitful are direct and indirect competitors. Once an entrepreneur connects with its competitors, a wide variety of marketing plans are available to use. A simple action is for each of the relationships to provide space in their place of business for the others sales and marketing material. Another way is to maintain a supply of each others business cards and marketing material so that when interacting with customers each can provide a possible referral if the situation is warranted. Co-branding on each others websites and printed marketing material is a popular option as well as sharing booth space at local business trade shows.

Another very popular approach is co-op advertising where both companies offer one product or a few products of a national brand so both will work together to produce a larger ad with greater reach promoting the national brand and each distant offering. It can also be used to provide specialized service to customers that may fall out of a company's targeted zone. For example, if two companies provide maintenance to businesses and one is focused on small businesses while the other handles larger ones, an opportunity exists. This last method could include bundling a service, such as a company that specializes in rug cleaning could team up with a housekeeping company; a used car dealer with a car detailer; or a restaurant bundling with a hotel to offer discounts when a patron uses both companies.

Starting and operating a business is certainly the foundational element of an entrepreneurs dream, but finding and building successful relationships with other business will increase market exposure, credibility and stability in the business community, which improves the chances for success.

10.1

Gaining publicity by systematically seeking and winning industry recognition and awards for innovation, customer service, quality, or other measures of success

Author: Melanie Foreman

With the advent of the World Wide Web, and the subsequent vast wealth of information available to the general public, savvy consumers don't make even the smallest purchase without thorough research. The accessibility of information has raised the competitive bar for modern companies. With the click of a mouse, a consumer can easily compare and contrast every aspect of a product prior to ever entering a storefront or making an e- purchase. Industry awards and recognition provide a valuable medium to impress potential customers and distinguish itself from competitors. With the high cost of advertising, awards and recognition can create value for the brand at little cost.

To gain more insight in to how the publicity gained from these types of honors can impact consumer behavior, I decided to walk a mile in the shoes of an average shopper. Upon searching the web for "cellular phone customer service awards", I quickly found T-Mobile has received several JD Powers awards. The T-Mobile website proudly touted the prestigious honor. I must say, as a shopper, I suddenly placed the T-Mobile product in higher esteem than in the past due to the noteworthy recognition. At the very least, it caused me to consider the product when otherwise I would not have given it a second glance. By knowing

that other consumers just like me rated T-Mobile outstanding for service, I could envision myself as a happy customer.

Recently, another commonly sought after recognition is for environmental responsibility. Often, it is by no accident that firms play on the public's desire to purchase from businesses that have been recognized as leaders in the "green" arena. Not to say that these businesses don't also have a social conscious, but it would be naïve to underestimate the strategic planning to increase shareholder returns through environmental efforts. An example of a brand using environmental awards as a marketing strategy is the office supply company, Ricoh. A prominent piece of the Ricoh website is the "Awards" and "Environment" sections.

Not only does the company display several awards, but also goes in to detail to explain the environmental principles and policies for which it stands for and as part of the overall mission statement. In contrast, a similar competitor, IBM, lists some awards on its website, but it is not intertwined with the identity of the brand as is the case with Ricoh. A consumer interested in matters of the environment could easily be swayed to consider a Ricoh product based on similar values.

Lastly, the type of industry awards and recognition sought after should be relevant to the target market. For instance, Glenn Close is a nominee for the 2009 AARP Inspire Award. A company whose target market is older Americans could greatly benefit from associating itself with Close. It would be easy to assume Close could serve as a convincing spokesperson for a vitamin company targeting older American women. On the other hand, Close would not carry the same marketing weight with a company selling cosmetics in a teen magazine. The

consumer must perceive the award or accolade as meaningful or inspirational by personal standards.

Seeking and receiving industry recognition and awards, including customer service, quality, or other measures of success can drive profits and provide differentiation in a competitive market. The publicity gained as a result of this type of recognition can add perceived value in the eye of the consumer in a competitive market at a relatively low cost. A company would be wise to implement a multi-faceted marketing approach, including capitalizing on industry awards and recognition that signify success and excellence.

10.2

Using gift certificates to promote your business, develop new customers, spread your brand, and even to raise capital

Author: Stephanie Anderson

Gift certificates over the years have slowly replaced what we remember as mounds of Christmas presents under the Christmas tree. In some families, we recognize how often those brightly wrapped Christmas presents containing a present given from the heart in hope that the recipient will desire the contents, are being replaced with a Christmas card and a gift certificate so they may purchase exactly what they want. Aside from Christmas, we find that other celebratory occasions are also rewarded with gift certificates such as anniversaries, birthdays, and graduations. This ever growing distribution of gift-giving can benefit business owners immensely if they also participate in offering gift certificates.

Gift certificates are a superb way for business owners to promote their business. The purchaser of the gift certificate may be a returning customer fully aware of how excellent your business is. This purchaser will also be fond of the idea of giving a cash value present exclusively to your business to their loved one for them to also enjoy. The recipient of the gift certificate, now in possession of a certificate of a specified monetary value, is likely to redeem their certificate by visiting the businesses website or store and purchasing your product. Instantly, by offering gift certificates, the business has received the opportunity to appeal to new consumers. On the other hand, the purchaser of the gift certificate may be doing so because the recipient may have expressed their love for your business. With either scenario, the number of individuals aware of your

business and product has increased.

I have found when redeeming gift certificates that rarely will consumers limit their spending to the specified monetary amount the certificate is valid for. More often than not, consumers will select an item, particularly one of a higher value than their gift certificate, in order to reduce their perceived out of pocket expense. The business is now raising capital by offering gift certificates. The purchaser of the gift certificate may have also purchased items from the business because they found appealing products or excellent prices, when all they really set out to purchase was the gift certificate.

The business, by offering gift certificates, has now been given a golden opportunity to spread their brand and prove their product. The gift certificate makes the initial purchase possible, and if pleased with the product and prices, chances are the consumer will return and perhaps share their satisfaction with yet another consumer. Consumers are generally creatures of habit, but if they are introduced to a better product and/or a better price, their habits can be swayed. By offering gift certificates, a business is able to promote their business, develop new customers, spread their brand and even raise capital if properly executed. If the business is a prominent business and one that can prove their excellence, the trend of building the business and the cause and effects are never-ending.

10.3

Reel in Customers One Prize at a Time: How to use free trials, samples, and other incentives to excite current customers and reel in prospects

Author: Jenna Hardy

96 years ago, Cracker Jack inserted a free prize into every package of its famous caramel-coated popcorn (Cracker Jack). From plastic toys to baseball cards, every single box contained a surprise that young kids everywhere couldn't wait to get their hands on. The more boxes Mommy and Daddy bought, the more prizes Jimmy Jr. and little Sue got. And they *must* have every prize! It's no wonder the "Cracker Jack prize" soon became a pop-culture phenomenon. Ever since introducing "a prize in every box" in 1912, countless songs and movies have helped keep the Cracker Jack brand alive, reminding consumers of how great it feels to get a free prize. Remember the 1994 comedy *The Little Rascals*? Alfalfa gives his love, Darla, a ring after saying, "I had to eat six boxes of Cracker Jacks to find it (*The Little Rascals*)!"

Alfalfa was not alone in his actions then and, if he were a real person still trying to win over Darla, he would be one of the millions of children today still hunting for the free prize. Nowadays, almost all cereal boxes contain jigsaw puzzles and other nominal trinkets to entice young consumers. Adults hunt for the prize, too, but in the form of frequent-flier miles, free MP3 downloads, "under the cap" sweepstakes, cash-back rewards credit cards, free consultations, free demonstrations, etc. - all prizes for making an initial purchase or purchasing more frequently.

In an economy filled with cost-sensitive consumers, businesses have to develop new ways to reel in customers; to find new ways of enticing them to buy. When every dollar counts, consumers will not spend money on products they are unsure of without some incentive. Offering free trials and samples gets consumers to at least try products. And this, of course, brings them one step closer to buying.

Psychologists call it the foot-in-the-door technique – people will be more inclined to agree to a large request if you get them to agree to a much smaller request first. Think about the last time you were asked to try a piece of cake in the grocery store (an example of in-store sampling). There was most likely a whole cake on display nearby. Was it a coincidence? No. If you agreed to try the sample and liked it, you would be more inclined to buy the whole cake so your friends and family could try it, too.

It all comes down to understanding what motivates a consumer to buy.

For instance, let's face it; there's a little packrat in all of us. We like collecting as much stuff as possible because it's fun and simply because we can. Did you know that a 144-card set of 1914 Cracker Jack baseball cards sold for \$800,000 in 2004 (CBS Sports)? Give consumers something to collect and they will, even if it means buying 144 boxes.

We also like instant gratification; that is, instant rewards or prizes for choosing one brand over another. And even though brand loyalty may exist, a competitor's really good prize can sometimes be very hard to resist. Let's not forget excitement either...I want to be excited about trying a product or service

for the first time. I want to feel the same excitement every time I buy it from that point on. The minute the product or service bores me, I'll go look for something else. Keep my interest by continuing to offer me free samples of your newest products or free trials of new services.

Lastly, a consumer like myself does not like taking risks. I want to know a product is good before I am asked to purchase it. A free trial would be perfect. In a free trial, though, both parties need to understand and abide by the terms of the agreement. For instance, many consumers fear that businesses will sell their personal information after they sign up for a free trial. If your business promises not to sell anyone's information, do not sell it! If the trial period lasts for 30 days, do not ask the customer to return the product any sooner. Safeguard your reputation, one of your company's greatest assets, by "sticking to your word."

Businesses that endeavor to keep customers "hooked" can attain a competitive edge in the market. When television, print and Internet ads are no longer as effective as they once were, providing free trials and samples can be a viable solution. These types of incentives inspire consumers to try new products and make repeat purchases, which increases product usage as well as builds brand awareness. Ask members of the Cracker Jack Collectors Association how many boxes they have bought to get prizes that can then be traded at conventions. Ask, too, how excited they were to be interviewed by *The Today Show* at the 13th Annual Cracker Jack Collectors Association Convention this past June (CJCA). The 115-year old Cracker Jack brand is as strong as ever.

Last but not least, don't be afraid to be innovative with your samples. Creative packaging for direct mail samples and in-store samples can make your product stand out from the rest. Teaming up with another product (in-pack sampling) can make your product more noticeable as well. Hand out uniquely packaged

samples at sporting events, shopping centers and other popular venues. Internet sampling is the newest option and offers a ton of possibilities. Innovative samples, rewards and prizes *will* reel in customers. Emphasizing the word “free” in bold, bright letters will bring them in just as fast.

Sources:

1. CBS Sports. “1914 Baseball Card Set Sold for Record Price.” Nov. 2004
2. <http://www.sportsline.com/mlb/story/7946720>.
3. CJCA. Cracker Jack Collectors Association.
<http://www.crackerjackcollectors.com>.
4. Cracker Jack – Brief History. 2008. Cracker Jack.
<http://www.crackerjack.com/history.php>.
5. *The Little Rascals*. Dir. Penelope Spheeris. Universal Pictures, 1994.

10.4

Need attention? Creating contests and awards programs for fun, profit, or supporting a worthy cause

Author: Krista Neumann

Everyone loves free stuff, right? Giving away free promotional items has been an effective marketing tool for business ventures. Offering some type of reward can definitely increase the number of returning customers, as well as new ones. This can be done in a variety of ways. Premiums and incentives can be very beneficial in gaining customer support. Premium or incentive programs include discounts, merchandise or travel certificates or rewards. A positive aspect of using this type of marketing tool is that a business has many options when designing the program. One can choose what kind of reward will be offered, who can receive it and what must be done to qualify for the incentive program; the rules are completely up to the business owner.

Loyalty programs are also very effective. These programs reward customers for coming back and doing business with the firm. Some businesses provide customers punch cards; when they make a purchase, the card is stamped or punched. When the customer fills up the card, they receive a free gift or product. Many airline companies use frequent flier miles programs, where customers earn free flights after travelling a certain amount with the airline.

Contests are also effective marketing tools and can attract attention to a company. This works especially well for online businesses. When customers fill

out an entry form, they are exposed to the brand of the company; whether they win or not, the impression will last. Like other incentive programs, the rules are up to management. These guidelines can be modified to fit the individual needs of one's business. Promoting the contest is beneficial. Besides ad campaigns, some less expensive advertising can be done. For example, you can submit the contest to the website, Contest Beat. The website is a blog that provides links to a different contest on the Internet every day, free of charge.

Choosing appropriate promotional rewards or gifts is very important for the success of an incentive program or contest. Customers won't waste their time on something they don't want. A business owner should research the market to see what buyers find appealing for a reward. Offering a community survey can be a helpful way of doing this. Another important factor in developing a rewards program is where one purchases the free gifts. This can be costly, but fortunately there are companies that specialize in reward programs, and others that focus on promotional gifts. These companies often give you access to desirable gifts, but at a fraction of the cost.

Sources:

1. *Small Business Newz*, Marketing through Contests:
<http://www.smallbusinessnewz.com/topnews/2008/03/19/marketing-through-contests>
2. *Content4reprint*, How and Why Premiums and Incentives Are Effective Marketing Tools:
<http://www.content4reprint.com/business/management/how-and-why-premiums-and-incentives-are-effective-marketing-tools.htm>

10.5

Market your Business and Expertise through Public Speaking

Author: Kelly Abbe

Entrepreneurs are always looking for new and innovative ways to reach their customers. A colorful medium that one can use is the art of public speaking. Public speaking can consist of workshops, conferences and seminars. The platform for public speaking is endless. Opportunities can manifest through professional industry boards, business associations, schools, colleges, community centers, chambers of commerce and online webinars. Entrepreneurs can appeal to potential customers through speaking about their passion and expertise in their industry. After all, today's society thirsts for information and sees it as an item for consumption.

Entrepreneurs should approach the presentation process in the same way as they implemented their business venture. The initial stepping stone for a presentation should be the vision behind it. The entrepreneur should ask themselves, "What do I want to gain from presenting and what do I want my audience to gain?" These two questions will foreshadow the rest of the process. An example of a vision would be to gain more recognition in the community and at the same time bring in new customers.

The entrepreneur should see the audience as a target market. Will the target market be comprised of peers in the industry or the general public? This is important to decipher before planning for the presentation. It is essential to know what information is appropriate based on the audience's competency and needs. An example of a target audience might be community college students who only need a basic understanding of the entrepreneur's business industry. Another example could be a professional conference amongst peers that would entail more specific and original information.

Once the audience is confirmed, it is now time to pick the subject for the presentation. The entrepreneur should write a list of topics to cover and have a formula for easy comprehension. The outline should be the bones of the presentation. The entrepreneur should then flesh out their ideas and decide how the information will be presented. The format can be a lecture, visual presentation, demonstrations or collaborative. The entrepreneur should reflect on their own strengths when it pertains to presenting. For instance, they might be skilled at presenting orally but not with computer technology. The entrepreneur must use their intuition to know what will keep their audience entertained. It is important to give an invigorating and informative presentation or else the reason for presenting in the first place may return void.

The last step to making a presentation successful is advertising it. Similar to a business venture, the entrepreneur must market the speaking engagement to reach the target audience. It is important to assess the demographics and psychographics of the customers in order to choose the most efficient form of advertisement. The venue in which the presentation will take place should also be taken into consideration, because it determines the capacity and accessibility

for audience members. An example of a choice in venue could be an auditorium at a local college campus which would be convenient for students who are already on the grounds. Another venue could be a hotel conference room that would appeal more to business professionals.

Public speaking has a tremendous amount of benefits for the entrepreneur. It allows the entrepreneur to be recognized as a leader and expert in their field. They are able to share their knowledge and fervor to their audience. They should not use their platform to make a sales pitch, but instead create a sense of necessity for the product or service they offer. The entrepreneur also benefits from presenting because it keeps them up to date in their field. Many times the entrepreneur will learn just as much through preparation and speaking as their audience will. The audience will frequently feel a sense of connection and appreciation to the entrepreneur for the presentation. This could result in the audience members becoming new customers and referring the business to others.

Public speaking is a powerful tool in the business world. It is a secret weapon to some of the most successful business men and women. They are recognized not only for their products or services, but also creating a sense of credibility to their venture.

Appendices

Appendix A

Author Notes

Kelly Abbe has experience in counseling, professional presentations, and business consultation. Her business interests include graphic design and life coaching. Kelly is also currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Tasheenia Bennett is an aspiring not-for-profit business owner. Tasheenia desires to help others achieve their dream of home ownership through education and counseling. She is paralegal for the Air Force National Guard in which she has been a member for 10 years. She is a graduate of Empire State College and is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Dale L. Fey is the owner and partner of several businesses, a Realtor and a former corporate executive. He provides consulting services on marketing, coatings, sales, printing processes, creative direction, mass customization and product differentiation to the consumer goods markets. Dale is also a technical expert on the camouflage decoration of hard good products. Currently he is

enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Melanie Foreman is a Revenue Manager, with ten years experience in the gaming and entertainment industry. Melanie's professional background includes experience in Food & Beverage, Marketing, Planning & Analysis and Revenue Management fields. Melanie is a graduate of Montreat College and is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Peter C. Gibbs is the Deputy Associate Administrator for the Office of Surety Guarantee at the US Small Business Administration (<http://www.sba.gov>) in Washington, D.C. Mr. Gibbs also owns a transportation franchise and an entertainment company, both located in Bowie, MD. Mr. Gibbs concurrently is a Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army Reserves and has been deployed at the Pentagon in support of the current war since June, 2006. He is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Wendell C. Godfrey is an instructor at Haywood Community College and Pisgah High School. He has worked in the paper industry for over twenty years and is a technical consultant to this industry. He also has his MBA and is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Jenna C. Hardy is a graduate of Western Carolina University and has studied entrepreneurial concepts for several years. She enjoys reading and writing about successful ventures and the challenges that businesses face. Jenna is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Ernest H. Hays is an Innovation Specialist and the founder of The Logical Computer Company, Inc., an IT consulting firm formed in 1984, serving hundreds of new clients each year in Central Florida. Ernest is a "bleeding edge" technology evangelist and has guided unborn, new, and older businesses through the rigors of applying just the right technology, at just the right time, and at just the right cost, to the right part of each business. His motto "Turning High Tech into Common Sense" brought small, medium, large, and commercial, as well as governmental, entities to utilize his services. Ernest was instrumental in bring AI (Artificial Intelligence) to NASA as part of their need to reduce costs during launch sequences, as well as automating redundant tasks usher in the computer era! Ernest H. Hays is also currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Carrie House (Editor & Author) is a marketing maven with ties to numerous non-profits in the metro-Atlanta area. Her time is devoted to helping non-profits become the leader in their industry with effective marketing strategies. She is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University. She hopes the knowledge she gains in this esteemed program will better prepare her to run her own specialized animal care facility, assist her in continuing her efforts in helping smaller non-profits become

more successful, and lead her down the path of innovation at the American Red Cross as she handles their life-saving marketing strategies.

Robert Lahm (Introduction Author) began his professional career by honing an array of corporate marketing management skills in **advertising**, **public relations**, and **research** related positions. He has also previously founded entrepreneurial businesses, including an **advertising map publishing company** (as a co-founder), a **career service** and a **marketing firm** to service the strategic planning and communications needs of business-to-business, consumer, and public sector clients. He has taught at both the MBA and undergraduate levels, addressing subjects such as organizational change, management of technology and innovation, strategy, and entrepreneurship. He earned his **doctorate degree** at **Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies**. Presently, besides Web site development and public speaking, Dr. Lahm's **strategic planning and organizational development practice** interests emphasize helping organizations stimulate creativity and innovation in order to proactively manage change in challenging times. He suggests that we were all much more capable and creative as children, and his interventions serve to "reverse the constraints on thinking new thoughts" that years of cultural conditioning tend to reinforce. Among other sources, he has been previously recognized in several *Who's Who* publications, including *Who's Who in Advertising*, *Who's Who in the South and Southwest*, *Who's Who Among Young American Professionals*, and *Who's Who Worldwide*.

Jonathon Lawrie is Manager of the North Carolina Community College BioNetwork BioBusiness Center in Asheville, NC. He has earned a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Microbiology and Immunology from the University of

Washington, Seattle and is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Krista Marie Neumann is an aspiring educator with hopes of starting a non-profit organization. She is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Christopher Parsnow is a project engineer at the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), with a degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology from UNC Charlotte. He is currently enrolled in the Masters of Entrepreneurship program at Western Carolina University.

Daniela Pavel is a graduate of the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, Romania and of the MBA Program at Fayetteville State University. With more than five years of experience in start-up domestic and international businesses, Daniela has also won a First Place award for an outstanding written business plan. She has also won several presentation awards in other National and International Business Plan competitions. When not competing, she assists other graduate teams in achieving first place success with their business plans as well. She is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Tom Philpott is a quality assurance professional with 18 years of experience in manufacturing. Along the way he has developed a passion for creating new

business endeavors. Tom is a 2008 graduate of Greensboro College and is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Mike Rabinowitz is a 20 year veteran of the securities industry, currently working as a project manager for a start-up tech/financial services company. Mike is currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University. Mike Rabinowitz is currently battling Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and looks upon others with more interesting maladies with envy.

David W. Reeves is a licensed architect with thirty years experience consulting with individual clients, corporations and public institutions. He is also currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Tice Tansil has been an entrepreneur in the Internet retail business arena for just over a decade. He is also currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Frederick J Tiess CEC, FMP, CCI is an award-winning professional chef who teaches French Cuisine at Johnson and Wales University in Charlotte North Carolina. Fred is also currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University. Fred is the author of The Culinary Reference Guide and his E-book Flavors of the Season, which has been used to

direct funds to charities in an effort to eliminate childhood hunger. His website, <http://www.chefreference.com> features free recipes and culinary videos from his ABC Family program called Living the Life.

James White is a business analyst and adjunct professor interested in the nature of entrepreneurial ventures. His specific areas of interest include knowledge, sharing, collaboration, and the effective use of online learning technologies. Jim received his Ph.D. in Information Systems Management and is also currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.

Latia White is has been involved in education for over 15 years. She was a community organizer in Alexandria, Virginia, helping parents achieve equality in education. In the Washington, D.C. public school system she developed and taught professional development courses in multicultural education. Currently she is an educator having taught in Nevada. Ms. White is also currently enrolled in the Master's Degree in Entrepreneurship Program at Western Carolina University.