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Effective Marketing Strategies That Don't Break the Bank

By Janice Byer

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Every start-up business goes through phases of needing to try something different to increase their exposure and bring in new clients. Even established businesses need to revisit their marketing strategies every once in a while to help bring in new and repeat business.

During a recent business chat at Staffcentrix.com, in which I was honoured to be the Mentor of The Month and chat moderator, several Virtual Assistants (VAs) with varying experience in the small business sector, shared their ideas and know-how.

The consensus among the chat participants is that certain marketing techniques will work for some small business owners but may not be as successful for others. It was also agreed that the cheaper the method, the better.

Myself and all the other VAs found this chat very informative and beneficial. So, with the hope of passing on the great ideas that were bounced around, to up and coming VAs or any small business owner, I have put together a list of the marketing strategies that VAs have found successful, during their start-up phase and beyond.

1. A company website. This is probably one of the best and most cost effective forms of having your company visible to your potential clients....and its available 24/7! If you have the time and patience to learn to put something together, give it a try! Or, consider hiring a professional designer in order to get an exceptional site. The benefits of having a website are definitely worth the expense. But remember to shop around and be comfortable with your designer... and the money you pay.

2. Signs in or on your vehicle. Window decals are fairly inexpensive considering their lifespan. Remember to include your website address. If funds are really short, make signs on Bristol board and put them inside the windows. You can also get Licence decals. These can include your website address, company name, and

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phone number and fit nicely around your licence plate.

3. Join your local business associations. And don't forget to get involved! Your local Board of Trade or Chamber of Commerce can provide an abundance of opportunities for your business. The networking events are a way to meet other business professionals in your community. And, getting involved in the committees allows you to share your expertise and be recognized by your fellow members.

4. Pinup Flyers. Include a tear-off section on the bottom and put the flyers up at your local stores and other locations that may have bulletin boards.

5. Fax Broadcast. Design an informational or fun page, similar to a newsletter, and

send it out to fax numbers for your target market. Please note that fax broadcasting is not allowed in some areas of some countries, so be sure it is okay in your area.

6. Keep in touch marketing, such as a personalized thank you to a new client or contact, a Christmas card that simply says thank you, and a monthly newsletter (print and/or online) to all your customers and contacts.

7. Iron on transfers. As a small business owner you already eat and sleep your business, so why not wear it too. You can purchase the transfers at your local business supply store and, I imagine, at craft stores. Then it's just a matter printing your logo (or whatever you want on the shirt) onto a transfer and ironing it on.

8. Articles & Press Releases. Writing articles is a good way to receive exposure and it also helps you to be regarded as an expert in your field. Press releases can be used to announce a new business, when you provide a new service, or any other time you have some news to tell. There are 2 keys to a press release... the Headline and making sure it doesn't sound like an advertisement, but more like it is news.

9. Networking. This is another highly beneficial and cost efficient way to get the word out about your business. Attend designated networking events as often as possible. Also, when possible, follow the Three Foot Rule... if appropriate, strike up a conversation with anyone within 3 feet of yourself and be sure to bring up your business.

10. Testimonials. These can be implemented into many pieces of marketing. Include a sentence or two in your advertisements, brochures, newsletters, and you can even dedicate a whole page on your website to the kudos you receive from satisfied clients.

No matter which marketing efforts you use, keep track of where your inquiries and new clients are coming from. Don't be afraid to ask them how they heard about you and/or your business. Asking only takes a couple of seconds and the results will show you

which strategy is working for you the best.

Put your imagination to work... instead of your wallet and watch the business roll in.

Develop An Online Marketing Strategy To Maximise All Of Your Marketing Activities

By Wendy Hearn

Developing an online marketing strategy is essential before you do any marketing or promotion of your business. Without a strategy it's like stabbing around in the dark, not knowing what you want to achieve. You risk your marketing becoming unfocused and not producing the results you really want.

An online marketing strategy is the general and overall approach you'll take with your marketing and encompasses the big picture. It's the starting point for choosing the most effective marketing tactics to use and then the actions you need to take. A clear strategy helps you make the right day-to-day decisions, saves you time and keeps you focused.

Before doing any marketing of your business, you need to develop your strategy. This gives you a clear picture of what you're up against and what you need to overcome through your marketing. This enables you to choose the best marketing tactics. The tactics are the means of achieving your strategy.

With so many different marketing tactics to choose from it's too easy to do what many people do and that's just pick any tactic. Just picking any tactic prevents you from maximising your marketing and the results it produces. You may use a variety of marketing tactics to fulfil your strategy.

So, how do you develop an online marketing strategy?

First you need to do an appraisal and gather information about your company, competitors, customers and other industry players. You need a clear picture of what you're up against. This includes identifying your target market/clients and carrying out a SWOT analysis.

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S – Strengths

What are the strengths of your business?

W – Weaknesses

What are the weaknesses in your business?

O – Opportunities

What opportunities are available to your business?

T – Threats

What threats is your business facing?

Next, define specifically what are the challenges and problems that you need to overcome. From this answer the question, "What will it take to overcome your main marketing challenges and problems?"

Once you've developed your objectives, then choose the strategies to support these objectives. Your strategies could include:

Improve communication

Educating potential clients

Sharing information

Increase awareness of your products/services or company.

Then select the most effective marketing tactics to bring your strategies to life. These tactics then need to be turned into an action plan.

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Effective Marketing Isn't a Game!

Creating Your Internet Marketing Plan

Developing a Web Site Marketing Plan

Strategies for Creating a Niche Business

GUERRILLA MARKETING Volume 2

GUERRILLA MARKETING Volume 3

GUERRILLA MARKETING Volume 1

Email Marketing in 2006

The Great Big Book of Internet Marketing



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