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OCTOPUS MARKETING – Create a Community of Opportunity

By Romanus Wolter

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Yesterday as I sat down to get a haircut, I noticed that for the first time that I was the only customer in the shop. My barber anxiously asked, "Are the stores empty where you work?" He told me that 40% of his business has eroded; half of his customers had moved away and the others had been laid off.

Reality has hit his small business. Business is off in most sectors. People are staying home, seeking comfort and familiarity. I hear the same cry everywhere I go—"We need more customers!"

Small businesses don't have the advertising budgets of large companies to lure customers back with special deals. And the government's messages to "go spend more" have the right intent, but do not direct customers to the doorsteps. How can small businesses reach these customers?

**STRETCH YOUR TENTACLES!**

With some imagination, will power and a technique I call "Octopus Marketing," small business owners can create new opportunities to increase sales.

Octopus Marketing is the ability to make one marketing effort produce multiple effects, increasing returns without increasing effort. By tapping an Octopus on the head, its tentacles stretch out and reach in different directions. Business owners can do the same thing. By leveraging their own value and partnering with other businesses or organizations, a single marketing event can pay off again and again.

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The head of the octopus is any organization or group of business owners that partners together to reach more customers. Each member of the organization or business is one of the tentacles. It works like this:

First break the rules. View other small businesses as partners, not competition. In these uncertain times, small business owners need to band together and develop a unique marketing program that will pull customers to the neighborhood, into stores or onto web pages.

Observe how other merchants, whether they are florists, produce

stands, café owners or optometrists, offer services and goods that benefit and support the community. All of these products and services bring comfort and familiarity—which is exactly what customers are asking for right now!

For example: My barber can join the local bakery, video store, pizza parlor, coffee shop and florist to develop a "Neighborhood Comfort Catalog." The catalog simply lists each store and the benefits they provide (plus discounts on products and services!). Each partner places the catalog in their respective stores and uses it to refer business to each other.

Octopus Marketing starts with an effective message. Businesses must define how they uniquely contribute to the community and translate that into an effective story. By developing a message based on their passion, businesses reveal the benefit they offer to themselves and their customers.

After identifying their own unique benefits, a business owner can then partner with others and define the main benefit that the Octopus Network offers to the community. This benefit is what will move customers to action.

With the message identified they can then discover unique ways to market each other's businesses or conduct joint promotions. It can be as simple as asking customers if they have tried the fresh pizza next door or passing out coupons that offer discounts on their goods and services. The result is that reach of their tentacles grows.

To stretch the tentacles of the Octopus even further, businesses can partner with larger organizations to get the word out. Combine the community octopus with a neighborhood church, temple or community

organization. These organizations reach a lot of potential customers.

Businesses should continue to tap the Octopus to keep the network thriving. They can approach the local neighborhood paper to publish the comfort catalog in a special community page. Or find out if the local gym or YMCA will distribute it to their members. What about the Chamber of Commerce, isn't it there to help?

By uniting together, small businesses can strengthen community, deliver what customers need plus help create opportunity for the nation's collective future. One small business at a time, we will build a compassionate nation that spends money on good stuff.

### **Are You A Marketing Octopus or A Marketing Worm?**

**By André Bell**

One of the greatest challenges to effectively marketing a business is determining which marketing method is best suited for your business.

Most people look at what their competitors are doing to market their businesses and then simply imitate that, whether good or bad.

The best marketing strategy does not involve selecting only one or two marketing approaches that we see others using.

The best marketing approach resembles an octopus.

An octopus is very effective at catching food with eight limbs. If the octopus loses one limb it may momentarily lose some of its strength and agility, but it adapts and continues on as an effective hunter and predator.

It's the same with marketing your business. The more marketing approaches you use simultaneously the more successful you can become and the easier it is to continue growing your company.

You will continue to thrive despite the challenges that your competitors may face. No setback in any one marketing approach will ever devastate you or pose major problems.

Despite the many options available most companies use no more than two or three marketing methods at best to grow their company.

Few realize that there are over 100 methods for bringing in new business, for increasing web traffic, for selling more to existing clients, and for increasing repeat sales that their competitors are not using.

They basically imitate worms in their marketing attempts. A worm's approach to life is singular. It does

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not use multiple limbs because it has none. Its existence is slow and labor-intensive. Very unlike an octopus.

The great thing about this is that most competitors are making this same mistake. They may be too busy, too shorthanded, or too myopic to do much more than hand out boxes of business cards and sit around talking 'fish stories' of the one that got away.

That is a marketing approach to avoid.

Don't just settle for an ad in the yellow pages, your local newspaper, or on the radio.

Use as many marketing methods as make sense for your industry, your market, and your company. Then you will become a marketing octopus while your competitors remain marketing worms.

André Bell is principal marketing consultant with André Bell Consulting Group. A free copy of his new book "101 Marketing Secrets Revealed" is available through his site at

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