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Small Business Marketing: Are You Using a Net or a Spear

By Jeremy Cohen

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When I was back in college, over a decade ago, I decided that when I was done I would run off to Alaska and work in the fishing industry. The lure of hard menial labor and the outdoorsman's life seemed so tantalizing to me after having toiled away in academia, not just for the past four years, but for most of my life.

I learned as much as I could about the fishing industry: working on boats, at the docks and in canneries. I learned that one of the popular techniques used by commercial fishing companies is to cast huge nets between ships miles apart and drag them through the sea capturing anything unfortunate enough to get snarled. While this technique netted prolific amounts of fish, the vast majority of the catch could not be sold at the market.

What a waste! Not only do these companies unnecessarily deplete a precious natural resource they also waste their valuable time and energy setting and hauling in nets and then sorting through their catch to identify and pluck marketable fish from the masses.

While large fishing companies can afford to expend their resources in such a manner, as a small business owner, you would be ill advised to follow such a path when fishing for new clients. Small business marketing tactics must be much more precise and efficient to be viable.

To continue our fishing example, consider a tribesman from a pacific island. Instead of employing large nets a tribal fisherman will stand and wait, knee deep in water known to be plentiful with the type of fish he seeks with only a spear in hand. When a fish swims by he lunges with his spear and voila! Dinner is served, or at least caught. The tribesman's method is highly efficient and effective.

The methods you employ when marketing your small business or professional service firm should minimize waste and maximize sales.

Are you using a marketing net or a marketing spear to find new customers?

Size Matters

A marketing net can take many forms. One of the most common forms of marketing with a net is investing in the belief that the larger the group you market to the better the chance of developing new business. This type of thinking could not be farther removed from reality. You can much more effectively generate quality leads and sales by focusing your marketing efforts on a smaller yet highly specific audience.

If you've ever placed a display ad in your local newspaper, paid for banner advertising on a popular web site or paid for a radio or TV commercial only to be disappointed by a meager response there is good reason dissatisfaction.

While there were likely a few potential clients who saw or heard your ad the vast majority of those you reached simply had no need for your products or services. What's more, those who might indeed have a need for your product or service were likely not actively seeking what you sell at the moment they saw your ad.

You can improve the response to your advertising by marketing to a smaller but more focused audience. Your ad will not only appear in front of those who have a need for what you sell, it will be seen by more people who are actively seeking what you provide.

Take some time to identify periodicals and other ad vehicles that serve your market and fit your budget and then place your ads in front of a smaller but more specialized audience. You will sell more and get more for your advertising dollar. It's amazing what a spear can do.

Sharpness Matters Too

Even if you trade in your marketing net for a spear (focus your market) your marketing results may still be disappointing if your spear is dull – you may squarely hit a fish with the tip of your spear but if it is not sharp the fish may squirm away.

You can perpetually keep your spear sharp with an outstanding marketing message. Your marketing message should speak directly to your buyers and clearly communicate why they should buy from you. If it does not your future customers won't ever take notice of you, even if you are the ideal solution for their needs.

Many small business owners use a poor and ineffective marketing message because they do not fully appreciate the value of a good one. A strong marketing message will be noticed by those most likely to become your clients and will work to get your prospects to take the action you want them to take: visit your store or web site, contact you for more information and ultimately, buy from you.

Take some time to examine your marketing message. If you get the sense that it isn't very focused, it probably isn't. What words and phrases can you use to sharpen it up?

Move Your Marketing Forward

Get rid of your net and sharpen you spear. Even if you hate to fish or have never gone fishing, you'll find yourself looking forward to every opportunity to wade into knee deep water.

Small Business Package

By BanPro NET

Small Business Package by BanPro NET

January 10, 2005

BanPro NET announces the addition of a "Small Business Package" to it's web hosting services. Specializing in small and home based business web services since 2000, this package is the result of careful research into the basic needs and demands of small business hosting clients. There's plenty of server capacity for a website to grow from and tons of additional free software targeted towards the small and home business all at a very affordable rate. This package is intended to not just meet a client's needs, but also to help (the often non-technical) customer in overcoming the many challenges that building a successful small business website comes with.

Details on this new Small Business Package can be found at www.banpro.net

:About BanPro NET:

BanPro NET first began providing web services in 2000, with only a single server in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The day that first server went online, Scott Bannon, the owner of BanPro NET used a black Magic-Marker to write the following message on an office wall; "To provide high quality products and services. To treat each customer as a good friend. To be an asset to our community. This is the BanPro NET philosophy."

Staying true to that philosophy, BanPro NET has been rewarded with a steady growth of clients and respect for the reputation it's acquired as a leader in providing quality service and customer support.

With web servers now located in six Data Centers and on two different continents, BanPro NET offers a full range of online solutions for small and home based business clients.

Visit the company web site at www.banpronet.net for more information.

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