

Marketing 101

Maximizing Your Marketing Effectiveness

How To Create Your Own Mini Marketing Plan

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It doesn't have to cost a lot to yield the results you want, now!

When building our own businesses, we often don't have the extra time or money to spend on fancy promotions or up-town advertising agencies. Yet, in today's unpredictable economy, we need to maximize our marketing effectiveness, in order to succeed.

The number one way to maximize marketing effectiveness is to plan to consistently capture opportunities. The following is a simple questionnaire you can use as an outline for your own Mini Marketing Plan. To keep your planning process as brief as possible, keep your answers to short and to the point. Be sure to collect samples of everything you can, representing each category, and place them in a binder for training and reference purposes. You will want to keep copies of your answers to the questions divided in your binder using tabs reflecting the items noted in upper case below. This binder will become your Mini Marketing Plan.

The information you collect for your Mini Marketing Plan can be used in preparing letters, answering customer questions, training employees and educating customers and in many other ways. The number one most important use for your plan will be to broaden your customer/client base by reaching out to land new business. No matter your field or industry, in today's market, waiting for customers to find you just isn't good enough. We must make every effort to reach out in ways that lead the best qualified customers to our door.

*Please note: If you're going to take the time to ask for customer input, it is imperative you act on it. If you do not intend to act on it, don't bother to ask. Poor follow-through only accentuates the negative.

Simple And Effective Small Business Marketing

What you need to know to create a good base for more effective marketing

Getting Started – Ask yourself these important questions as the basis of a new marketing approach.

1~ BRANDING | What do we do, better than anyone in the world?

1. What is our message
2. How do we compete--experience, delivery method, price?
3. *Value, turn-around speed, longevity, industry. What is our unique selling proposition?*
4. *Services, equipment, people, club or organizations affiliation, special training or education, unique clients, trade shows, premiums, uniforms, vehicle signs, advertising, etc.?*
5. How do we want to be known? What are our mission and goals with customers, products or services?

2 ~ POSITIONING | Whom do we serve?

1. Who are our three primary markets? (Who are our customers?) Type/current percent?
2. Who are our three secondary markets?
3. What services do we provide?

3 ~ PROMOTION | How do we spread the word?

1. Clubs, organizations, trade shows, premiums, uniforms, vehicle signs, advertising, etc.
2. How do we handle our database and contact management?
3. What are our maintenance marketing activities?
4. What materials do we use to present our services? How Do We use them?

4 ~ SALES | What Is Our Process?

1. How do we seal the deal?
2. How do we qualify new clients, customers or projects ? Go- no-go?
3. Proposals, interview, techniques needed to be customized--what are they?
4. What paperwork do we use to close a sale? (list)
5. What are our trained skilled negotiating activity requirements?
6. How do we track our pipeline?
7. What materials do we use to close the sale?
8. How do we teach and use these materials and procedures within our business?

5 ~ DELIVERY | How is marketing delivered by everyone in the company?

1. Who is lead sales? What is their plan? What are their special skills?
2. Who are secondary sales agents, field people, office people, etc. and how do they sell?
3. What are our customer service methods?

6 ~ FOLLOW-THROUGH | What is the last impression we leave with customers?

1. How do we check to make sure our performance matches our image?
2. What is our method of surveying* customers to improve service and show we care?
3. How and when do we schedule re-contacts with customers for return visits or promote additional sales to existing customers?
4. How and when do we review our marketing goals versus actual outcomes, identifying changes in behavior or company policy for needed changes?
5. Do we send welcome letters to new customers, or send thank you letters for referrals of new clients or projects?

Small Business

Basic Marketing Methods & Materials Checklist

Logo | You'll want to create a polished image from the beginning and some kind of unique visual hook for your company, and then splash it on your business cards, stationery and anything else you can think of.

But that doesn't necessarily mean spending thousands on a designer to come up with an icon that expresses your business. Shop and qualify your team carefully.

Business ID Package | Make sure your designer helps you craft your unique and cohesive look in all of your printed and web-based materials. Keep your team collaborating. Make sure you have designs and functional artwork in color and black and white versions for at least the following: Stationary, #10 envelope, note card, A-2 envelope for the note card, catalog envelope, folio, return address labels, file folder labels, holiday cards, post card blanks

Business cards | Many marketing gurus say that a great business card can be your most effective marketing tool. Pack it with as much information as it will hold, not just contact information. Good graphics are important, but not as crucial as actually describing what your company does in a line or two. Maybe put the contact information on the front and list your products or services on the back.

In any event, your business card must be different, memorable, and prospects must want to keep it.

Website | You should get this up and running before you open for business. You don't need to spend a lot of money on one, with all the site-building options now available. But it should be well-designed and helpful. You might even want to start putting a blog on your site right away to start up a "conversation" with your customers.

"Using the website as a primary 'marketing material' for a startup is good because you can't tell the size of a company by their website.

Brochure | This can be a virtual one, in PDF format on the internet, or a black-and-white, two-color or even four-color paper handout. In any case, it's important to have one, because it can cover a variety of general needs that no other single marketing document can handle, ranging from distribution at a trade show to a handy mailer for people who want basic information about your company.

Company clothing | Be your own billboard! You might want to consider putting this really high on your checklist. Wearing clothing with your company brand can start tongues wagging everywhere you go. “People will ask you what you do,” says Ruth King, small business expert and author of the book, *The Ugly Truth about Small Business*. “Then you can recite your pitch and ask for the order.”

E-mail signature | Don’t let any e-mail escape your computer without tagging it as a marketing message. Come up with a catchy e-mail signature and include your name, business name, contact information, pithy tag line, a web address and even a one- or two-line announcement at the bottom of the signature about a new book, product, seminar or service offering you’ve announced.

Packets for specialized needs | Depending on the initial focus of your business, you’ll need to develop packages of materials that are formulated around particular needs. If sales are hugely important at the beginning, you may need to come up with a folder full of brochures and spec sheets. If education is key, packets on areas addressing priority needs of your prospective and existing client’s or customers. Welcome kits are especially useful in orienting new folks.

Press Kit & Regular Release Schedules | If public relations are an important early consideration for you, you’ll need to produce some press releases and a media kit.

Elevator speech | A strong, 30-second spoken presentation that could compel someone to invest in your business in the space of an elevator ride – is one of our favorite marketing tools.

Database | A list or computer program containing all of your contact’s names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and contact history.

Schedule of Events | A computerized or paper calendar noting daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual business promotional activities.

Results Report | A method through which you track with marketing activities bring you results. You want to use this report to determine next year’s most productive methods.

Other Collateral You May Consider

- Welcome letter
- Welcome email
- Reminder post card
- Auto-response email for special circumstances
- Announcements – email and regular mail
- Reminder email
- Press release out regularly with photos
- White papers
- Specialized educational materials in print and web
- Photo gallery on web and in office
- New customer/client orientation
- Regularly staged events: Workshops on special topics, clinics for peers or referrers, VIP gatherings needing specialized collateral

Additional Reference >> <http://www.startupnation.com>