



15 Important Marketing Tips

In working with small businesses to promote their web sites, we have learned that many businesses need help in marketing. Here are the most important tips we have gathered to help you get the most out of your marketing dollar.

1. **What are your competitors up to ?**

Do an Internet search in Google and Yahoo for the item or service you plan to sell. Find out how much your competition is charging and how they are marketing the product. Try to narrow down which businesses will be your direct competition

2. **Will anyone buy ?**

Not every product or service is right for Internet sales. In our experience, unique products, hard to find services and name brand products are the best candidates for Internet sales. Look at your potential products and ask yourself - "Would I purchase this product on the Internet?"

3. **Why come to this web site ?**

No matter how good your advertising campaign, your web site needs valuable content to survive in the Internet. Create content that is useful, informative, educational or entertaining and you will create a market for your product.

Some ideas for attracting repeat customers are:

- Provide regular, fresh content: If visitors come back a couple of times and nothing has changed, they will lose interest and probably won't ever come back.
- Create "Web Site Only" offers.
- Put technical documentation online. Manuals and instructions can be easily lost. Make copies of them online. Customers who come to find the technical documentation they need will, in the process, be exposed to your latest products and services.
- Use "e-mail this page" links to help make sharing information and specials from your site easy. Pages sent this way, not only further your message, they actually have the endorsement of the person sending the page.
- Use "print-friendly pages" to encourage people to print out your information for later reference.
- Create a link sharing program. Make a page on your site full of external links to on topic sources of further and complimentary information. When you've done that, go through those sites and send a short, polite request to each of them that they add you to their list of links. Don't worry if they don't want to link to you, and certainly don't remove them from your list -- this is a nice way to add value to your site and demonstrates a certain degree of authority on a given subject.
- **Send a newsletter:** The most efficient means of keeping in touch with clients is a brief newsletter sent by e-mail. Tell customers and prospects about the new services and products you are offering, staff changes, successes, books your recommend, customer testimonials or successes with your product, and links to articles of interest.

4. **Am I unique ?**

The Internet is a crowded marketplace. The more unique your product or service, the more likely your success. Basic economics tells us two things:

- The more unique your product, then less competition you will have.
- The less competition you have, the less price becomes an issue.

Finding your niche means limiting your target audience, of course, but it does mean that people coming to your site are more likely to purchase your product. If you are planning a new online business, find a specialized market...if you already have a web site business, consider narrowing your online focus or create several different web sites to market your various products.

5. **What's my first impression ?**

Your business web site is your chance to beat the competition and wow your potential client. Show them what you can do and why they should choose your business over the competition. Aim for a crisp, clean design that emphasizes your professionalism and skill. Give your potential clients as the information they are seeking in a

format that is easy to navigate. Remember - your web site is likely to be your first point of contact with the customer. If you lose him now, you will not get him back.

6. **Am I getting their attention ?**

Promotional gifts can help get your company name and information out to your audience. The advantage of these items over traditional business cards is that they're more likely to be kept, plus your contact/business information generally remains on open view, as opposed to being in a wallet, purse or filing system somewhere. Aim for something people will keep or for something they will share. One of our most popular items is a nicely printed postcard with an interesting or funny cover which you can let your customers take for free....getting your name and information out to people who have never even been to your place of business.

7. **What is my corporate id ?**

The establishment of a brand is a key factor in any business's promotional activities. Create a corporate image for your company, and incorporate it into your letterhead and all other documents as well as your web site. The key to a strong brand is consistency, so make sure your logo appears on every page, preferably in the top left corner. If you use your brand name or slogan often throughout the site, make sure you do it the same way every time, as this signals to users that it's a title. Any literature you send in relation to your business should also follow form:

- If you send e-mails, ensure you sign them with the company slogan.
- If you send invoices, have the logo in the left corner.
- Design an attractive business card and include your web site address.
- Letterhead
- Receipts
- Warranties
- Packaging
- Promotional Items, such as caps, T-shirts, coffee mugs, pens
- Yellow pages and legitimate business directories
- Leaflets
- Posters and billboards
- Newspapers and magazines
- Storefront Windows

8. **Can this be true ?** Research any "opportunity" that comes your way and get referrals or recommendations before you buy. Things to investigate carefully include:

- Directories: Check to be sure that the directory actually exists and investigate the audience profile and distribution before you buy.
- Keyword sales: "We can sell you exclusive rights to 'your keyword' across the Internet." Before you buy, get names, phone numbers, physical addresses and references. No one can sell you keywords across the Internet.
- E-mail addresses for sale. Beware of participating in SPAM. Unsolicited e-mail is fast becoming a target of legislation which can ruin your ability to do business on the Internet.

9. **Have they heard ?** Use e-mail, phone, word of mouth and even regular mail to let everyone know about your new site, it's special features and how easy it is to reach you on the Internet.

Here are some suggestions which often get overlooked:

- Staff e-mail accounts: Be sure that everyone has an @yourcompany.com e-mail address and uses it. Encourage your employees to use their business accounts and make them available on your web site. Encourage your customers to contact you through e-mail at your company address.
- Ensure that the e-mail addresses are checked regularly -- at least three times a day for most businesses. Not having their e-mail answered will make your customers feel unloved, and will inevitably result in lost business.
- Create a standard company signature: Use your e-mail program to make sure that every e-mail sent from your company address has an official address no more than four lines long which contains useful information such as name, position, telephone, fax, and of course, the URL of the company web site.
- Use Auto- Responders: An automated response may come from a machine, but research shows that customers feel that they will get better response from those companies using auto responders than for those that do not
- Keep useful URLs handy: Keep a list of useful URLs from your web site at the front desk. When customers ask for information on a specific topic, give them the URL which has the information they are requesting...and better still, e-mail them the link.
- On hold message: Include information about what is available on your web site on your telephone hold system.

- Create a weekly or monthly promotion that is only to be found on your web site. This gives you a reason to tell people about your site when they call and will expose them to all of your services when they visit your site.



More questions on Marketing? Contact us today at 678.783.0128 or online at www.designpreviews.com

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