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A TEN-BOOK SERIES ON TOP BUSINESS FUNCTIONS

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Develop Successful
Marketing Strategies

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Growth & Business Coach

David Gabbert



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WIN AT BIZ®

DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL MARKETING STRATEGIES

A TEN E-BOOK SERIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
WHAT IS MARKETING?.....	4
COMMON MARKETING MISTAKES	4
DEVELOPING A STRONG BRAND.....	5
DEVELOP TOUCH POINTS TO REINFORCE THE BRAND	7
DIFFERENTIATING YOUR BRAND WITH PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT.....	9
DIFFERENTIATING YOUR BRAND WITH SALES AND DELIVERY PROCESSES.....	10
YOUR SUCCESS LIES IN A MULTI-FUNCTIONAL MARKETING PLAN	12
PRESENT YOURSELF AS AN AUTHORITATIVE LEADER.....	12
EARNING LOYALTY AND REPEAT BUSINESS.....	12
EARNING REFERRALS.....	13
EARNING NEW PROSPECTS AND NEW CUSTOMERS	14
PUTTING IT TOGETHER: HOW TO WRITE A MARKETING PLAN	17
HOW TO ADVERTISE.....	19
WEBSITES	19
CANVASSING	20
PERSONAL LETTERS.....	21
TELEMARKETING	21
SALES BROCHURES.....	22
CLASSIFIEDS.....	22
DIRECT MAIL.....	23
NEWSLETTERS.....	24
NEWSPAPERS.....	24
RADIO	24
TELEVISION.....	25
MAGAZINES	26
SOME ADDITIONAL MARKETING METHODS.....	26
TIPS FOR CREATING ADVERTISING THAT SELLS.....	27
CHAPTER SUMMARY CHECKLIST	29

DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL MARKETING STRATEGIES

Introduction

Almost all new businesses face the same problems: You think you have a great product or service, but nobody knows that you exist. You simply cannot find people to buy what you are selling. They do not understand or appreciate the value of what you offer. You spend a lot of money on advertising but get little response.

In order to survive and grow, every business has to attract new customers—and moreover, do it in an environment full of competitors. When a new business fails, the reason is usually that it failed to find new customers, build customer loyalty and repeat business, and create favorable word-of-mouth advertising.

Fifty years ago, when there was less of everything, it was easier to be noticed. There were three major television stations. In most communities there was one major radio station and one major newspaper that served the majority of the audience. There were fewer products and services and fewer niche markets, so consumers did not have so many choices when they wished to spend their discretionary dollars.

Today the consumer is knowledgeable, time-poor, inundated with an enormous selection of products and services, and flooded with advertising. Consumers get their information from a vast selection of sources: a plethora of cable television stations, numerous specialty radio stations, scores of newspapers and niche magazines. The sources for electronic research and marketing have multiplied, too; the average person receives hundreds of direct mail pieces and catalogs every week. Consumers can get their information in so many different ways that the market has become fragmented, and a business can no longer just advertise and hope to reach a mass audience. Furthermore, if you are in business today, you must compete against local specialty shops, national brand name operations, big box retailers, discount stores, factory direct stores, catalog distributors, and online stores.

As a result, the average small business has to target a very specific market—in other words, specialize—or else it will be invisible. In fact, many businesses, products, and services remain invisible because the consumer is overwhelmed with too much of everything: way too much advertising, too large a selection, and too little time. Consumers will not go out of their way to buy anything.

Blue Ocean Strategy, by W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne, paints a picture of the fundamental marketing problems most business owners face today. Kim and Mauborgne label the arena in which most businesses compete as a “red ocean” rather than a blue one. Red oceans consist of an industry marketplace that is so crowded with competition that supply exceeds demand. The marketing strategies in a red ocean become so well-defined and accepted within a particular industry that the consumer becomes oblivious to them. The companies compete against one another inside this well-defined box where all the existing marketing strategies are accepted as the only route to profit. Companies perceive that their only option for growth in a red ocean is to beat the competition, using any means possible, in an attempt to capture a larger share of the market; however, since the consumers cannot distinguish any real difference between

competitors' brands, the companies' products or services become commodities. As a result, the companies are forced to compete on price and lower margins to capture a larger market share, thus turning the competing waters red with blood.

Most companies operate in a crowded marketplace—in a red ocean. Some of them become successful by developing a marketing program focused around strong brand development that has differentiated itself by delivering exactly what the customer wants.

There is a better way. It is probably obvious by now: Get out of the red ocean. Stop competing within the confines of the well-defined and accepted marketing strategies. Instead, begin to develop ones for a blue ocean, where there lies untapped market space, where competition is irrelevant, where demand exceeds supply, and where profit margins are more generous.

Win at Biz Scorecard

- **Are you invisible in the marketplace?**
 - **Is your business competing in a red ocean?**
 - **Do you have a strategy in place for developing a strong brand that differentiates you from the competition?**
 - **Are people talking about you?**
-

What Is Marketing?

Many businesses operate under the false impression that marketing is simply advertising to sell products or services. In reality, a successful marketing plan entails much more. Everything a company does is marketing. A comprehensive, strategic marketing plan is an investment in the company's future.

A good marketing plan comprises a host of fresh ideas and strategies that drive prospects to you, while delivering the right message to those prospects at every customer touch point. It will also satisfy both the customer's stated and unstated wants and needs. A truly effective marketing plan builds such a high level of value, trust, and loyalty with customers that it creates a shield to protect their customers from competitors. It differentiates the company to such a degree that it reduces competition as the company pursues untapped market space.

Common Marketing Mistakes

Don't break a cardinal rule of marketing, and dump money into advertising before you develop a strategically integrated marketing plan. Remember, your goal is an airtight plan for building brand loyalty. Business owners are often eager to see their business's name in lights, and skip or take shortcuts in order to get there. To avoid making this costly mistake, be aware of the following, common pitfalls.

- Not creating a written marketing plan with a budget.
- A weak marketing message.
- Infrequency, irregularity, and no commitment to long-term exposure.

- Marketing to too broad an audience.
- Poor timing.
- Lack of a motivational message that moves people to act.
- Homogenous marketing media within your marketing plan.
- A marketing message that focuses on the company rather than how it benefits the customer.
- Marketing strategies based on assumptions.
- Expecting too much, too soon.
- Changing your marketing plan frequently.
- Inconsistencies in the look, feel, and image of your various advertisements.
- Failing to test various offers and measure the results.
- Ignoring promotions that focus on repeat business.
- Ignoring promotions that focus on up-selling to customers.
- Investing in websites that do not move people to action.
- Wasting money on image advertising.
- Expecting word-of-mouth advertising to generate revenue.
- Expecting prospects to call you back or giving up after one follow-up call.
- Basing your advertising decisions on what is cheapest.

Develop a Strong Brand

Part of a strong marketing plan is a strong brand. And here's a word to the wise: An effective brand is more than a creative logo and slogan.

Branding a company entails creating an entire business identity. Your first thought as you develop your brand should not be your company's products, services, or capabilities. Believe it or not, facts about your company are unimportant. The reality of branding is *how the customer perceives you when they interact with your company*. The customer's perception may be positive, negative, or indifferent. The test of a successful brand is in what the customer is saying about your company to others. First and foremost, is your brand strong enough to get people talking about you? Next, are they saying what you want them to be saying?

The first step in developing a strong brand is to list the stated and unstated needs and wants of your target market.

Second, list every place a prospect and customer will touch your company.

Third, identify the training and systems that will need to be developed at every touch point to exceed the customers' identified needs and wants. As your company satisfies its customers' inner wishes in excess of their expectations—every time they touch the company—your customers will develop a trust in your brand.

Once you successfully determine what your target market really wants, the marketing strategies will follow. Aim for a broad range of strategies that differentiates your brand from the competition. The further you get from the competition, the more your brand will appeal to your market. If your marketing strategy succeeds, it will build a brand that people feel is the best in your industry. They will pay you what you ask, and competition will become less relevant.

To sum up, your marketing strategies should make good use of a strong brand, so that the resulting loyalty de-claws your competitors. Loyal customers who believe in your brand will not only be dedicated followers but also will talk about your brand to their friends.

Exercise: Key Questions for Key Answers

Any good marketing program is founded on the answers to some key questions. Those questions will help you identify the needs and wants of your target market, and also decide how to differentiate your company from the competition.

When you are going through the exercise below, remember not to attempt to be all things to all people. Keep a very narrow focus or you will risk being invisible in the marketplace. Also, be diligent and collect reliable information about what customers really want and need from a business in your industry.

1. What are your customers' pains and frustrations when they do business with companies in your industry?
2. Why are they attracted to your business rather than to a competitor?
3. What are your customers' unstated and emotional needs that must be satisfied?
4. What actions must take place to develop caring and trusting relationships with your customers?
5. How do your customers want to make a purchase and receive the product or service? How can you be more proactive, and provide solutions before customers realize there is even a problem?
6. How can you provide more face-to-face encounters and build stronger relationships?

Here is another good exercise. What happens when a customer compares you to the competition? Take a shopping trip to the competition and find out. Examine its customer touch points and brainstorm how you can look different. Examine your competitors' weaknesses and look for opportunities. Do not fall into the trap of focusing on you, your products and services, or the sale. Conduct your research as a *customer*. Remember, effective marketing strategies are all about the customer. Focus on what will spark interest, engage curiosity, and add to your company's image and reputation.

As you research your customers' wants and your competition's offerings, you may find it helpful to organize your questions and answers around the following three criteria.

1. Brand Identity

- What are your product-related attributes or benefits that are better than the competition's?

- What are some organizational benefits that are better than the competition's? For instance, an organizational benefit could be a business process that is unique to your business model and helps differentiate your company from the competition. For example, customer service reps who have been trained with the appropriate knowledge to answer all customer questions without transferring the call to a supervisor; or follow-up quality control systems that exceed customer expectations. Strong organizational attributes will generally create more customer loyalty than product benefits.
- Can your brand identity be tied to a personality? For instance, using a local celebrity or any other unique personality as a spokesperson for your product, someone who can create a personality image that instantly connects to your brand.
- Can your brand identity be tied to a symbol (e.g., the Prudential rock)?

2. Core Identity

- What core identity does the brand convey? In other words, what does the brand say about the company's fundamental beliefs and values? What does the company stand for in the marketplace? Core identity resists change over time.

3. Value Proposition

- What are the functional benefits of the product that will stand out from the competition's?
- When the consumer is purchasing or using the product, what emotional benefits can you satisfy better than the competition?
- What are the self-expressive benefits of the brand? In other words, how does the brand become a way for a person to communicate his or her self-image?

Building Strong Brands, by David A. Aaker, is an excellent resource. The book offers several good formats for brand development.

Win at Biz Scorecard

- **Have you developed a written marketing strategy stating how you want customers to perceive your brand?**
 - **Have you accurately determined the stated, unstated, and emotional needs and wants of your target market?**
 - **Have you developed a list of the actions that will be necessary to achieve your branding goals in the minds of your customers?**
-

Develop Touch Points to Reinforce the Brand

As you develop strategies for fixing your brand in the minds of your customers, this path will invariably lead you to the subject of operating processes. In other words, you should now examine your training and other related processes—everything that touches your customers and guides the actions of your employees. Consider the experience of making an informational inquiry by telephone to a bank that hopes to brand

itself as helpful, friendly, and efficient. As you are instructed to push number after number to speak with someone, you start losing patience with the annoying process. When you do finally get a real person on the line, you get transferred to yet another person, only to get their voicemail. Most of us would simply give up, frustrated with the company's inadequate operating process.

What type of branding message do these touch points convey?

Every time a customer interacts with your company, its touch points must reinforce the brand perception you hope to achieve. The experiences of your customer at every touch point must be pleasing and deliver the desired effect; however, they must also differentiate you from the competition, generating the word-of-mouth advertising that every successful company needs.

Chocolates on Your Pillow Aren't Enough, by Jonathan M. Tisch, stresses the importance of differentiating your company with remarkable customer experiences at every touch point. The author is in the hotel industry, which is like other industries where the marketplace is crowded with identical products or services. In such a competitive business environment, he makes the case for not placing your marketing emphasis on advertising the product or service, but instead differentiating yourself by putting all of your energy into the total customer experience. Customers remember pleasant experiences, and if they are *uniquely* pleasant experiences, they will talk about them to their friends.

In order to accomplish a memorable experience, every time and every place a customer interacts with your business, it must be a welcoming, friendly experience. Consistency is critical. When pleasing experiences occur frequently, the company will be successful at building brand value or equity.

Examine every place a customer touches your business and determine what the customer wants at every one of those touch points. Frustration at any single touch point will cause a customer to drop out. Examples of the many points where a prospect or customer can touch your business are

- the receptionist who answers your telephones,
- telephone conversations with a salesperson or customer service person,
- interactions with your website or an advertisement,
- a face-to-face sales encounter,
- the delivery of the product or service,
- the payment method,
- how a complaint is handled,
- the level of enjoyment in experiencing the product or service,
- a solicitation from a telemarketer,
- the appeal of your storefront,
- the presentation of your product in the showroom,
- your catalog,
- your trade show booth, or
- a follow-up phone call.

Every time your business touches a customer, it must deliver what he or she wants in a welcoming, remarkable way.

Never lose sight of what customers want. They want their lives to be easier; they want to save time; and anything that they take the time to touch, they want to run more efficiently. They want more affordability, and they want their experiences to be fun. They want more personalized service today than ever before; they want more information both about the product and the company; and they want easy access to good communication.

You are your company—and so are your employees. Touch point experiences are therefore their responsibility, too. Engage them in determining what your customers want and deciding what actions will satisfy those wants. Have them conduct surveys: How does the customer's actual brand perception differ from the one you want them to have? Develop training programs to educate new employees about what your brand is intended to look like to your customers, and what actions accomplish those goals.

As an exercise, ask your employees to write down a few sentences describing your brand. The answers may surprise you. It is imperative that everyone in the company is on the same page as your company's branding goals.

Win at Biz Scorecard

- **Do you really know what your customer wants at every touch point?**
 - **Have you examined every point where a prospect or customer can touch your business?**
 - **Do your touch points offer an extraordinary experience that differentiates you from the competition?**
 - **Are the experiences unique enough to encourage customers to talk about your brand?**
 - **Have you developed the training systems to educate employees about your brand, stressing the actions that will be required to build it?**
-

Differentiate Your Brand with Product Development

You can also differentiate your company by focusing on the product or service. Seth Godin, in his book, *The Purple Cow*, suggests that you will be invisible if your product or service does not target a small group of people that will be more likely to listen. Yet getting even a small group to listen to your advertising is difficult. As a result, you must invest your money in your product or service to make it so outstanding that people will talk about you and seek you out.

A remarkable product or service starts with your effort to first identify a market niche, and then create an extraordinary product or service that will meet its needs and solve its problems. Get inside your customers' heads. Make something they will love. Your customer's wants will probably take you down the most difficult path, but that will be the right path every time. As you develop your remarkable product or service, explore the outer boundaries and get as far away from the competition as possible.

For example, look at the Sleep Number Bed's business model that was established in the 1990s. During its startup phase, it entered the mature and competitive specialty bedding business. It approached the industry by building its business model around a highly differentiated product. That product was a mattress supported by air that could be set to a person's own personalized sleeping comfort. The name of the product, "Sleep

Number Bed,” described both the product and the number one benefit. The name was also synonymous with the name of the store and the brand they hoped to build. The product was the business model, and because the product answered customers’ wants so well, it differentiated itself in an overcrowded marketplace.

Another way to differentiate yourself is to educate your market, and make your customers’ jobs easier. During the founding years of DecoPac, the founders published a catalog they branded “The Magic of Cakes®” to benefit their customers, retail bakers. The catalog helped the retail baker educate their customers about the numerous custom cake decoration options that were available. The point-of-sale catalog increased the sales of DecoPac’s customers and differentiated DecoPac from their competition.

Finally, achieve uniqueness by targeting a narrow range of customers, and then making their purchasing experience easy. Consider Room and Board, a national furniture retailer specializing in contemporary furniture. In the 1990s, they produced a remarkable product by getting as far away from the competition as possible. In the crowded and competitive retail furniture marketplace, Room and Board found success by doing just the opposite of traditional furniture stores. Rather than offering all styles of furniture, Room and Board sold only contemporary furniture at a mid-range price point. Rather than offering a broad selection with as many SKU numbers as possible, they offered fewer SKU numbers. And rather than cramming their product into a display space to increase sales per square foot, they gave their room displays generous space.

These are all great examples of how success is achieved in the zone furthest from your competition, and how remarkable products beat them every time. To be successful long-term, never stop enhancing your product to better meet the needs and wants of your customer. Once you are remarkable, you have to stay that way in the eyes of your customers. Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best: “Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path...and leave a trail.”

Win at Biz Scorecard

Can you develop a product that is so remarkable that it will differentiate you from the competition in the customer’s mind?

Differentiate Your Brand With Sales and Delivery Processes

Think for a second: How many times have you bought something from a particular vendor because the sales and delivery experience was easiest there? Michael Gerber, in his book, *E-Myth*, explains that if you are going to stand out from the competition and be talked about, you need to make your business model itself remarkable.

The business model is the operating process that determines how you are going to sell your product or service, and how it is going to be delivered. Obviously, your customers encounter many of these processes as touch points. Therefore, your processes must satisfy your market’s wants better than the competition does. Also, the business model must alleviate frustrations and satisfy customers’ emotional needs better, too. Each customer will perceive the value of your business model differently; however, if your

business model separates you from the competition, you will be creating real value in many customers' minds.

To say it another way, what you are really selling is the uniqueness of your business model. (Refer to Book 4 of the Win at Biz series, *Develop Efficient Business Processes*, for more details on the importance of developing operating processes to run your business.)

Let's look at Room and Board again as an example. Due to their unique operating processes, they were able to maintain a 20 percent growth rate for several years in the mature, saturated, stagnant furniture industry. Traditional furniture retailers rely on local newspapers, radio stations, and television advertisements to draw prospective buyers into showrooms. In the late nineties, Room and Board developed an effective shop-at-home marketing system using a catalog and website that conveyed all the necessary product information with striking text and photography. The shop-at-home catalogs and website are supported by a toll-free number staffed with knowledgeable salespeople.

Room and Board also provides a feel and touch experience of its products in several welcoming showrooms around the United States. Orders for furniture are processed for immediate delivery anywhere in the United States, right to the customer's door, from a central warehouse location in Minnesota where quality control systems can be implemented. The marketing and delivery systems developed by Room and Board have created a national market from a limited number of showrooms. As a result, this successful retailer experienced the largest sales per square foot within the furniture industry for several years.

Another example of marketing and delivery processes becoming a remarkable business model is a company named Tastefully Simple. This company sells gourmet foods through over 20,000 independent sales associates at home tasting parties. The independent sales associates carry the tasting samples plus a catalog to represent the entire product selection. The customer's purchases from the tasting party are shipped the next day from a central warehouse directly to the customer. This \$100-million-plus company experienced growth rates of 60 percent annually for many years.

Yet another example is the Kindle e-reader. This technologically innovative product is renovating the sales and delivery processes of purchasing a book. The Kindle offers an instant selection, purchasing, and delivery of your book.

All of these companies have developed marketing and delivery processes that have created exceptional business models that separate them from the competition by reducing customer purchasing frustrations and satisfying customer wants. As you search for methods to differentiate your total marketing package from the competition, get as far away from the competition as possible. Your challenge and goal is to design a complete marketing package that will take your company out of the overcrowded competition found in a red ocean and into the profitability of a blue ocean.

Win at Biz Scorecard

What can you do to develop your sales and delivery processes into a unique business model that will stand out from the competition?

Your Success Lies in a Multi-Functional Marketing Plan

A multi-functional marketing plan relies not only on the effective implementation of a brand, product development, and business process innovations, but also needs to be effective with promotional marketing events. To be effective, your marketing plan will need to build repeat business from your customers, develop referral business, find new prospects, and develop new customers. When you consider the varying outcomes that will be required from your advertising campaign, you will need to use a variety of effective media. All of your advertising promotions will give you a better return on investment if your target market sees you as an authoritative leader.

Present Yourself as an Authoritative Leader

As a customer purchasing a new product or service for the first time, wouldn't you be more confident purchasing from an industry leader? You can do just that when every touch point establishes your company as such, thanks to smart marketing. You will receive a much higher dollar return on your advertising investment if you are perceived as an industry leader. When you are small and just starting out, it will help to examine every marketing event and create it to reflect your company as a professional leader.

Your print advertising must be the most professional and informative in your marketing area. Your website must contain the best content, images, and navigation. Links with trade publications and trade associations must all point to your company as the authoritative leader. Your company needs to be out in front of the community, leading the way in education about your product or service. Consider publishing educational articles on the Internet to establish yourself as an expert in your field. In other words, you must build yourself up to be the best. Likewise, your service vehicles must be noticed as the best, and your service- and salespeople must be the best educated.

You can enhance your leadership position still further by associating yourself with the power of a recognized brand name. Never underestimate the power of brand name awareness in developing a leadership position.

I challenge you to examine your marketing efforts. Every marketing touch point must establish you as an authoritative leader in your industry if you are going to become a leading company.

Win at Biz Scorecard

Do your marketing touch points establish your company image as an authoritative leader in your industry?

Earn Loyalty and Repeat Business

The number one goal of any company is to build loyal customers and repeat business out of your customer base. The more loyal your customer base, the more successful you will become. Who are your typical customers? What do they look like?

It can be helpful to build a word picture of your target customers. An example of a word picture may look like the following: Your typical customers are in their mid-

forties, married with children. The household income is \$75,000. They live in starter suburban homes valued at \$250,000 and drive a Ford Taurus. They change workplaces and move an average of every five years. Their time is limited so they tend to shop close to home. They read very little but are active Internet users.

Once you have developed an accurate word picture of your typical customer, you are in a position to gear all of your branding and marketing plans around this portrait. Next, you fine-tune your training programs so that every employee knows how to deliver your branding goals at every employee touch point. Finally, you ensure that your marketing program satisfies your customer at every encounter—and then you arrive at customer loyalty. Loyal customers add value to the company in many ways; however, the most obvious is repeat business. When you consider the marketing costs to replace a lost customer, it becomes obvious that your most profitable sales are to your existing customers. Your customers are also your best source for up-selling additional or new products and services. In fact, a marketing strategy targeted at your customers on a regular basis will almost always deliver your most profitable return on each marketing dollar.

Consider statement stuffers, postcards, and courtesy telephone calls to stay in touch with your customers, introduce them to special offers and up-sell additional services. Newsletters are also a good way to stay in touch and add customer value with educational information as well as new product announcements. Websites, blogs, and other social media formats such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are also excellent avenues to exchange educational ideas and build customer loyalty. Remember, nothing will give you a bigger return on your advertising investment than the time you invest or the dollars you spend on promoting to your customers.

You can also increase the return on your marketing by becoming more involved with your customers. You must be nice to them, express an interest in their needs as customers and friends, know their names, and customize offerings to their needs. Customers remember personal attention. Nothing will be more effective at building loyalty and repeat business than letting customers know they are important and that you truly care about fulfilling their needs.

Win at Biz Scorecard

- **Have you built a word picture of your typical customer?**
- **Do you focus on the word picture of your typical customer when you are developing strategies for your branding, marketing and employee training? Building loyal customers and marketing them will yield the best return on your advertising investment.**

Earn Referrals

Keep in mind the single biggest reason today that a person buys from you, and not from the competition, is a referral from a friend. They want to know in advance that they can have an enjoyable experience with your business. In order for you to be successful, your marketing has to come full circle and culminate in a successful referral business.

A successful marketing program begins with the strategies for developing a strong

brand that separates you from the competition, as we discussed before. At the same time, it should also generate leads. One way to do that is to build loyalty and trust every time a prospect or customer interacts with your company. Word-of-mouth advertising will follow, and your marketing program will have come full-circle.

Every successful marketing plan also encourages customers to refer friends and neighbors to your business. Referral marketing is one of the most cost-effective ways to add new customers, increase revenue, and build your customer base. Most often a referred customer is your easiest sale because they have been pre-sold.

Consider these guidelines as you build your referral marketing program.

1. Identify your most satisfied customers to ask for referrals.
2. Contemplate the best time to ask for a referral. It may be more beneficial to let the customer experience your product or service before asking for a referral.
3. Customers will be more willing to give referrals as a favor when you have willingly given some extra service to them at no charge.
4. Provide some type of special reward for referring a customer. Promote the incentives on your website, statement stuffers, or other appropriate advertising.
5. Send a personalized thank-you letter to each customer who gives you a referral.
6. Establish incentives to gather testimonials from customers on a submission page within your website. After approving the testimonials you will showcase, give your customers access to them to share with friends. Your customers can use these testimonials as tools to sell your company to their friends.

Win at Biz Scorecard

Every successful marketing plan must include a strategy for encouraging customers to talk about you to their friends. Does your marketing plan include incentives for your customers to refer friends and neighbors?

Earn New Prospects and New Customers

Don't fool yourself; a company will not survive long-term without a marketing program that is consistently developing prospects. One of the best books on this subject is *Guerrilla Marketing*, by Jay Conrad Levinson. He explains the importance of developing an annual marketing plan and committing to that plan for the long-term.

You can never stop marketing for new business because

- the market is constantly changing with new people moving in and out,
- people forget about you if you do not continually keep your name in front of them,
- your competition will not quit marketing, so if you quit, the competition will capture your share of the market,
- to survive you must to keep finding new customers to grow and replace lost customers,

- it gives you an advantage over your competitors who do no marketing, and
- if you start and then stop, you lose the investment and benefits of all your past marketing expenditures.

In order for your marketing plan to keep generating new prospects, you not only must commit to marketing as a vital component of your business, but also you also must be patient. There is a big difference in the psychology of treating marketing as an investment versus treating it as a mere expense. One advertisement costs money, but a commitment to a marketing plan is an investment in the company.

Bear in mind, too, that most marketing efforts do not produce instant results. In order for a marketing plan to be successful at developing prospects, you must deliver a consistent message, consistently. As customers grow more familiar with it over time, they grow more likely to trust you with their business. Don't get discouraged!

Finally, just as placing one advertisement is not an effective marketing plan, utilizing only one medium or one strategy is not an effective marketing plan, either. To attract customers, use a combination of different media and strategies. Remember, success lies in a *multi-functional* marketing plan.

How to Aim for Your Target Market

In general, non-targeted, blanket advertising to a mass audience will give you the lowest return on your advertising dollar. It will be important to market to a narrow target audience who wants and needs your product. Your most cost-effective approach will always be to develop a credible target list for which to direct market to; so, to lower your marketing costs per sale for a continuous stream of new prospects, start by profiling your typical customer with a word picture. Next, search for a prospect list that matches your profile. A direct marketing approach will include

- door-to-door or face-to-face encounters,
- direct telemarketing,
- personalized letters accompanied by phone follow-up, or
- direct mail that includes limited-time offers.

Any offer you make should include a variety of inquiry options, such as a return card, website address, or telephone inquiry number. Any marketing event that puts you in direct contact with your target audience, such as tradeshow, community events or associations, conducting seminars, speaking engagements, or online social networking will pay huge dividends, too. We'll discuss advertising at the end of this e-book.

Don't forget about your salespeople. Being successful at obtaining prospects is just the first step. Your investment in planning and marketing expenditures will all be for naught if you do not have the right people and efficient business processes in place to turn the prospects into sales. Read more about how to build a successful sales team in Book 8 of the Win at Biz series, *Build a Successful Sales Organization*.

Make it Easy for Your Target Market to become Customers

How many times have you delayed a purchase because you couldn't access information easily, or else the purchasing process was inconvenient? Every marketing medium you use must offer easy access to information and multiple purchasing options. One size does not fit all.

A multi-functional marketing plan must include many touch points that keep a free and easy flow of information. Add punch to your marketing by making it convenient—customers don't want to struggle for service or product information, and especially not when placing orders. How many touch points can you develop that will both transfer product information and close sales? Examine the effectiveness and convenience of transferring product information and closing sales on a website, over the telephone, by e-mail, through a catalog, or by a direct sales visit to the home or business

Win at Biz Scorecard

You must make it easier to buy from you than it is from your competition.

Converting Prospects to Sales

When was the last time you investigated your competition's sales methods? After you develop a prospect, how efficient are you at turning leads into sales?

Creating successful advertising to develop prospects is just one step in a successful marketing plan—and one we'll cover in the next section. Suffice to say here, in order for any advertising dollar to yield a return, you must develop efficient processes to convert prospects into sales.

- First, identify all the steps involved in turning a prospect into a sale. Make a list of every touch point.
- Examine each step relative to your competition and your customers' wants. As you perform each step, are you confident that you outperform the competition? Identify what you can do to improve each step.
- Do you impress; do you blow your customers off their feet?
- Does the first impression wow them?
- The flow of information must be easy to understand, useful and immediately available.
- Any print literature must be more professional and informative than your competitors'.
- Salespeople and customer service people must be well trained, knowledgeable, capable of solving problems, and well informed.
- The sales processes must include efficient follow-up actions to successfully convert prospects into sales.

Your multi-functional marketing plan will have come full-circle when you are successfully developing a steady flow of new customers, growing your revenue from a loyal customer base, and financially benefiting from vibrant word-of-mouth advertising.

Put It Together: How to Write a Marketing Plan

No matter whether your business is new or twenty years old, it is imperative for you to develop an effective and profitable marketing plan on an annual basis. In order to develop a well-thought-out plan that is going to guide the company's growth, it must be in writing. As they say, if it is not in writing, it is not a plan. As you develop your annual plan, collect ideas from your key employees to engage everyone in the growth process.

Each year, identify or refine your target audience, the various marketing media you will use to reach it, the frequency of each marketing event, and what your cost is, expressed in terms of percentage of sales. Include all your other marketing strategies in the plan, as well—your branding statement or marketing message, a list of the real wants and needs of your target market, actions that must take place at every touch point to successfully build your brand, any marketing strategies that will lower costs and create more value, and strategies that distance your product, sales, and delivery processes from the competition. This must all be in writing or you do not have an annual plan.

Given the logic and importance of a written marketing plan, it is hard to fathom the number of businesses that lack one. Think about it! The marketing plan predicts the success of the business plan and bottom line. How many accountants would manage the financial statements and financial planning without writing anything down? It only makes sense to also put your marketing plan in writing.

Once you have an annual written plan, you must commit to it. Remember, frequency and consistency breed success. Measuring results, experimenting, and adjusting the annual plan will make your marketing plan pay off.

Think of every part of your marketing plan as an ongoing experiment. Like any scientist experimenting in a lab, you need to constantly measure your results. If you do not measure results, you could be wasting time and money on media that are poor performers. To maximize your return, monitor every medium and strategy so that you can kick out the poor performers and double up on the good performers. For instance, if you see that incentives pay off, make an effort to include one in every advertisement. For example, "Mention this ad and receive a _____ absolutely free." Remember, your annual marketing plan is dynamic and must be refined continually in order to maximize the return on your investment.

Now, let's translate this scientific thoroughness into action. First, consider everything that touches a prospect when you are developing your marketing plan. For example, the signage and cleanliness of your trucks have marketing impact. How your phone is answered, the appearance of your employees, the design of your invoice, the ease of interacting on your website, and how you handle a return or credit all have an effect. The more obvious marketing touch points are the face-to-face or telephone sales presentations, the performance of the service, the installation of the purchased product, the quality control, and the follow-up after the sale is completed. All of these marketing efforts need to be measured for their effectiveness. Remember, if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it!

Decide which media and strategies develop the most prospects, and which ones build loyalty and additional revenue from existing customers. Again, Jay Conrad Levinson's book, *Guerrilla Marketing*, is helpful: It discusses a variety of media ideas and marketing methods. As you review these different ideas you will notice that they all

have different strengths.

Sometimes it helps to think in terms of whether the marketing method lends itself to passive or active marketing. *Passive marketing* is your typical paid print, television, and radio messages. *Active marketing* is any marketing method that puts you into an active, relationship-building role. Trade shows, seminars, charity events, networking with trade association members, telephone conversations, and face-to-face meetings are all examples of opportunities to become an active marketer and increase your marketing return. Active marketing efforts will usually outperform passive marketing efforts.

Whenever possible, attempt to combine an active marketing event with a passive marketing media. For example, utilize television to generate prospects and follow up with an active in-home sales presentation.

Sample Marketing Plan

	Event/Medium	Frequency	Cost Each	Annual Cost
Developing New Prospects	Marketing Lists	1	\$1,000	\$1,000
	Direct Telemarketing	1 Person	15 Hours/Week \$12/Hour	\$9,000
	Salesperson	1 Full Time Salesperson	\$30,000	\$30,000
	Direct Mail	2 Rounds	\$10,000	\$20,000
	Sales Literature, Brochures	1 Piece	\$1,000	\$1,000
	Door Hangers	1 Round	\$3,000	\$3,000
Improving Sales Procedures	Analyze customer wants & objections. Develop branding language to sell benefits & satisfy objections.		\$0	\$0
	Conduct role play training		\$0	\$0
	Establish a software tracking system for follow up.		\$0	\$0
Building Referral Business	Upgrade website to develop testimonials	1 Project	\$250	\$250
	Invoice stuffer - reward program	6 Times per Year	\$350	\$350
	Upgrade website offer - reward program	1 Project	\$350	\$350
Building Repeat Business	Postcard to customers	Monthly (12)	\$2,500	\$30,000
	Customer phone marketing	1 Person	15 Hours/Week \$12/Hour	\$9000
Up-Selling to Customers	Invoice stuffer	Monthly (12)	\$350	\$4,200
	Upgrade website promotions	1 Project	\$450	\$450
Total Annual Cost				\$110,350

How to Advertise

By the time you get to this point in your decision-making process, you have probably already made the critical decisions about what your customers want and how you want your brand to be perceived. As you put the finishing touches on your marketing plan, you need to figure out the best advertising media to communicate your brand and successfully generate revenue from both new and existing customers. The following highlight the benefits of a variety of media choices to help you find the best fit for your marketing objectives.

Websites

An Internet presence is one of your best media marketing values, and possibly your most effective marketing revenue producer. A website has several advantages over traditional media. First, it is more convenient. Customers and prospects can get on your website from any location at any time of the day. Second, they can spend as much time on your site as they choose. Third, you can present an unlimited amount of product or service information with as much detail and photography as necessary. Fourth, websites offer interactive capabilities that are not available in any other types of media. Be sure to take advantage of this interactive capability by asking your users for ideas, feedback, and questions.

When you design your site, do not think of it as an advertisement. It is a shopping experience. It interacts with the customer and allows them to shop for as long as they wish. Some of the more important points to designing an effective website include

- a pleasing and attractive design with good graphics,
- detailed content,
- as much interactive capability as possible both within the site and with the company,
- a simple and clear format that allows a visitor to find what they want quickly,
- easy navigation from topic to topic within the site,
- as much personalization as possible, and
- easy procurement capability.

The website must offer a clear and efficient way to procure an order. To get the maximum benefit out of your website, your customer service people must offer a quick response to prospect and customer requests from your site.

You also must promote your website. Good interactive websites have tremendous potential to generate revenue if your target market knows that your site exists. Promoting your site in your other marketing strategies is a good place to start.

It is also important that prospects can find your site through search engines. In order to benefit from a search engine you may want to experiment with investing marketing dollars on a pay-per-click basis. The more you invest, the higher up on the list your site will appear. You also need to invest time researching keywords, incorporating the keywords into your site, developing rich content to publish on your site weekly, and getting as many companies linked and pointing to your site as possible. The goal is to establish your company's website as an authoritative site in your industry. Search engines

must be able to recognize you as a leader, and in turn will place your company on the top of the organic search lists.

Also consider links to your trade association websites so that product searches on those sites can lead prospects to your website. It can also be beneficial to participate in open forums on any industry websites that offer a free exchange of ideas among your potential customers. By adding threads to these open forums you can drive traffic to your site.

Writing educational articles and submitting them to opt-in e-zines is also an effective way to increase traffic to your site. Remember individuals search for free educational information so the more free, quality content you offer, the more value you add to your site.

Social networking is also an effective traffic generator. Consider learning how to utilize blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. You may want to consider soliciting advice from a search engine optimization (SEO) specialist to help you improve your company's search engine recognition.

Canvassing

At the other end of the marketing spectrum, going door-to-door can also be extremely effective. If your product or service can be sold more effectively with face-to-face contact, this marketing method offers the advantage of targeting a very specific audience. The disadvantage is that it takes a lot of time for one person to reach a large quantity of prospects. To be effective for a larger company, you will need to get many people involved in the canvassing campaign.

First, make sure to check with the city hall of the community you intend to canvass to see if they require a permit for canvassing. Some tips for success include presenting a neat, clean appearance, dressing as the prospects dress, and smiling as you announce your name and your company's name. Time is of the essence, so you will want to qualify your prospect right away with a single question. For example, if you are selling a window-washing service, you may want to ask the prospect if they currently use a professional window-washing company. If they answer yes, you can quickly ask a follow-up question, "Are you happy with your present service?" Ask another question to confirm you are talking to the decision-maker.

Whenever you mention a feature of your product, also mention the benefit. For example, if you are selling new windows, the benefits to the customer are the reduction in heat loss and the increase in the market value to the property. The features would be screens that have 50 percent more see-through clarity or high performance glass that reduces sound penetration. If you are selling new hard cover window treatments, the benefits are privacy and control of damaging sunlight to the furniture and fabrics. The features are cordless or top down, bottom up options that allow either the top half or the bottom half of the window to be covered. Remember, the benefits sell the product or service—not the features. The consumer only wants to know what the product will do for him or her.

Be sure to engage the prospects in conversation and try to learn something about their needs so you can show them how your product or service can help. Use brochures as visual aids to enhance the presentation and to earn credibility. Do not give the prospect the brochure until you have closed or attempted to close the sale. Proudly point out the successes of your company and give customer references; perhaps you have customers that you can use for references on the same block you are canvassing. Close the sale by asking for a decision on a delivery date or payment method.

If you are canvassing on a larger scale, you may want to consider having a professional sales leader manage a group of door-knockers or lead developers. The sole purpose of the door-knockers is to develop leads for the sales leader and to leave informative door hangers for residents who don't answer the knock. The sales leader will be standing by to be personally called over to make the sales presentation.

The literature that you leave at the door for those not home may refer to the fact that you have an estimate for them and to expect a follow-up call. These "not at home" leads can be interfaced with your evening telemarketing program.

Personal Letters

The personal letter, when drafted properly, can be effective too. The more personal they are, the more of an effect they will have, so this marketing method is better suited to customers or prospects about whom you have personal information.

The letter needs to be about them and not you. For example, you could say, "I noticed how beautiful your home looks with the new exterior remodeling and painting. Would you like some ideas on how you can improve the looks of your retaining walls?" Remember to always state the benefits of your suggestions to the customer. An approach might be, "An updated retaining wall will complete your exterior remodeling and add to the value of your home both esthetically and financially."

Keep the letter short, clear, and error-free. Most people read the salutation first and the postscript second, so put your best benefit and a sense of urgency in the postscript. In fact, it adds a nice personal touch to hand-write the postscript.

Rather than requesting a response, simply inform the prospect that you will be following up. Just like every marketing strategy, it is the active marketing strategies that get the results. For example, to improve the effectiveness of personal letters, call your customer or prospect first, informing them about the special offers in the letter that will be mailed to them tomorrow. Or mail the letter with a personalized note attached, informing them that you will be calling. Then proceed to place a series of follow-up phone calls within a few days after they receive your letter.

Telemarketing

Since the mid-nineties, telemarketing to individuals and families has become more challenging. Therefore, telemarketing is a better choice for selling business-to-business. A phone call allows you to qualify your leads quickly and to verbally give more details about your product or service than other marketing media. Keep in mind that telemarketing can work well in conjunction with other marketing strategies, especially

direct mail and canvassing where literature has been distributed.

Another advantage of telemarketing is your ability to target specific markets. Effective telemarketing campaigns use well-thought-out scripts that are practiced to sound natural. Telemarketers need to be trained to ask a lot of pointed questions to uncover needs and objections. They need to know how to answer the objection, confirm that the objection is solved in the prospect's mind, and sell benefits. Then they need to know how to ask decision-making questions to close the sale.

Sales brochures are good marketing tools to mail out to qualified prospects that have not been closed. As always, testing and adjusting your sales presentation should be a never-ending process.

Sales Brochures

Brochures are marketing workhorses. They allow you to go into a lot of detail about your product or service and bring it to life with color photography. Sales brochures can be used effectively as visuals during a sales presentation; they can be used to build referral business by giving or mailing them to customers who have already purchased; and they can be given to qualified prospects who could not be closed, as a way to keep your message in front of them until the next follow-up call.

If you are mailing a brochure to someone, make sure you enclose a personal note on both the envelope and the brochure so it stands out from all the other direct mail they receive. Sales brochures can build credibility and confidence, helping to turn prospects into paying customers.

In developing a brochure, you first need to decide what you want the brochure to do. Do you want it to help close sales, generate referral business, drive prospects to your website, or to act as a silent salesperson? Remember that the advantage of a brochure is that it can be informative, so don't be afraid to use a lot of good copy.

The first thing a prospect should see in the brochure is what you are offering. The offer needs to be stated in terms of what it is going to do for the prospect—in other words, the most important benefit. This message needs to be tied directly into a color photograph that supports the message. Remember, color sells, so always use color images.

The remainder of the brochure should list the additional benefits and give information that will create credibility and confidence. Be sure to tell your prospects exactly what type of action you want them to take.

Classifieds

Classifieds ads are not targeted to a specific audience; however, it puts your ad where people who are actively seeking your product or service can find it. As a result, it can be a powerful, cost-effective medium when it is generating results.

Do not forget to include the online classifieds. In some online formats you may need to place the ad daily to stay at the top of the listings.

To maximize its effectiveness, use a short headline in capital letters that captures attention. The content of the copy should follow directly from the headline. The copy

should be written as if you are talking to one person and should be formatted in colloquial “people talk” versus the sometimes cryptic, abbreviated “want-ad talk.” Remember to include the main benefits, yet keep the advertisement as short as possible. The ad should end with a motivation to buy.

The following is an example of a classified ad for a lawn maintenance company:

ENJOY A BEAUTIFUL, MAINTENANCE-FREE LAWN

Save time and treat yourself to a great-looking lawn. We have been planting and maintaining thick, weed-free lawns since 1985. We also mow, seed, aerate, and deep-root feed. So relax and enjoy your weekends. Call today for a free estimate and recommendations. 777-7777

Direct Mail

Direct mail allows you to target a specific audience and, like a brochure, go into great detail about your product or service. You can also use color photography to bring your offering to life. This medium can accomplish an array of sales goals—developing leads, driving prospects to your website, or generating immediate sales. Direct mail is also a great way to stay in touch with customers and create additional revenue.

Measuring results with this medium is easy, and so is getting feedback to make the piece more effective in the future. The disadvantage is the cost of the postage; however, as long as the response rate justifies the expense, postage is immaterial.

You can also consider direct mail packs. Direct mail packs are 25 to 50 postcards from individual advertisers, all bundled together into one promotional direct mail package. By sharing your delivery costs with multiple advertisers, you cut your postage costs significantly, but you will also give up the flexibility of mailing to smaller target audiences and pinpointing specific delivery dates, and you will be forced to print a much smaller mail piece to present your offer.

When developing a direct mail piece, the first decision you need to make is whether you will mail a letter in an envelope or as a flat mail piece. Advantages of a flat mail piece are that print production cost will be less than producing both promotional literature and envelopes, and the mail piece does not need to be opened to be seen. For the flat direct mail piece, consider using oversized mailers larger than 5.5 x 8.5 inches to capture attention. If you do use an envelope, make sure you use a brightly colored or an oversized envelope with a teaser printed on the outside that encourages the recipient to open it. Other points to keep in mind to maximize results are as follows:

- The headline should state the primary benefit.
- The graphics should support the headline.
- State all the additional benefits and offer solutions to problems.
- Use lots of “you” and “yours,” highlight important statements in red and use the words *free* and *guarantee*.
- Use testimonials when appropriate.
- Repeat the offer on the reply card.
- Make it easy to reply and respond.

Newsletters

Regular newsletters are a great way to stay in touch with customers and to build loyalty. This is also a good medium in which to present new ideas and offer solutions to problems. Many times the topics discussed in a newsletter can end up generating additional revenue.

The newsletter should not resemble an advertisement. It should have newsy headlines with educational and informative content—not to mention attractive photography. Remember, because they are newsletters, they must be timely and relevant.

Newspapers

Ads in newspapers have a broad reach and are relatively affordable for the small business, especially in the zoned sections. Newspaper zones allow you to target a specific and smaller geographical area, which gives most small businesses an opportunity to achieve a better return on their advertising dollar. A good strategy is to watch what days and in which sections your competitors are advertising and jump in there with them.

Whatever you do, the same goal applies: Get a good return on your advertising dollar. The location of your advertisement on the page is important. A four-column, twelve-inch ad is the largest size available, and it will dominate the page. For smaller budgets, a two-column, four-inch ad will usually get stacked on top of larger advertisements and obtain a good location above the fold of the page.

Your graphic image is also important. Good art or photography will get you read. So will making sure your headline, image, and copy all support one another with a common message. Repeat your company name as many times as possible, always looking for ways to stand out from the other advertisements on the page. Color will work best if you can afford it; however, unique borders, reversed text in black ads, the use of gray tones or an unusually large amount of white space can also make your advertisement stand out.

As is true with all of your marketing materials, maintain a consistent appearance among your newspaper ads by using the same types of images and font. Furthermore, if newspaper is a medium that complements your marketing objectives, then be consistent in frequency: Your ad should run two to three times a month. Remember, consistency builds awareness and confidence.

And as always, remember to test. You can change the offer or coupon every time you advertise so you can effectively track the results. You cannot afford to spend money a second time on an advertisement that does not give you financial results.

Radio

Along with newspaper ads and direct mail, radio is another attractive mass medium for small businesses. It has the distinct advantage of voice, which allows the message to be more personal than other media.

If radio is your medium of choice, consider advertising on three to four radio stations. Study the audience of each carefully, seeking the best match with your target audience. You will also have to decide between what the *Guerrilla Marketing* book calls

background stations versus foreground stations. The difference is background programming that plays music versus foreground programming that features conversational topics or talk radio. Talk radio programming will appeal to more active listeners.

To obtain the best return on your advertising dollar, do not accept the advertising rates on the rate card. The rates can usually be negotiated at lower prices. Also consider advertising three weeks out of four, concentrating your spots into two or three days of the week. This strategy will allow you to achieve maximum consistency for the least cost. Also consider running thirty-second spots versus sixty seconds.

Keep in mind you only have a few seconds at the beginning of your radio spot to capture the listener's attention. Use background music to develop the types of feelings and emotions you want to convey that words cannot. Repeat your selling point and company name as many times as possible, using ear words versus eye words. As always, test often with special offers or a direct response telephone number. If you are not achieving the necessary results, change the copy immediately and keep testing until you have a proven winner.

Television

TV is one of the most effective mass media, but also the most expensive if you hope to dominate the major network stations. It is more effective than other media because it can sell and demonstrate your benefits visually while enhancing the selling points with audio. Cable television now commands a larger audience than network television and is still growing.

Fortunately, with the introduction of cable in the 1990s, television ads are now more affordable for the average-sized business. The ability to zone your advertising to a specific geographical area reduces the cost. To negotiate the best price, use a media buying service. They will charge you a percentage-based fee; however, you will still save money off the rate card quote.

To select the most effective stations for your business, study the audiences of various ones. And as with radio, you only have a few seconds at the beginning of your advertisement to grab the viewer's attention. An advertisement should work visually so it will be as "mute-proof" as possible. Design your advertisement to sell visually without the audio, and then add the audio later to support the visual element. Show the product or service in action as much as possible. It has been proven that retention increases when the viewer can see the product or service in use or the results in a before-and-after scenario. Repeat your main selling point three times, utilizing the media's visual advantage to show your company name, location, phone number or website address several times.

Direct response television is ideal for products that adapt well to this type of sales format. Exercise equipment, cooking utensils, cosmetics, women's clothing items, and CDs covering a variety of how-to subjects are a few products that are successful on direct TV. Typically, direct response advertisements will be two minutes in duration, requiring a credit card for instant payment. And you can measure the effectiveness of your advertisement immediately.

Another tip on measurement. Develop specific promotions with limited-time

offers—they are one of the best ways to monitor the payoff of your advertisements. It is important to keep testing until you have developed winners.

Magazines

Magazine advertising has several advantages over other mass media advertising. First, it is an effective medium for color photography. Color pictures tell your story and build your image.

Second, because people buy magazines to spend time with them, they lend themselves to more detail and copy.

Third, you can create more credibility when advertising in magazines. Credibility creates confidence in your product, service, and company, which leads to more sales.

Fourth, you can target an audience to match your target market in specialty magazines more so than you can in a newspaper. For businesses with a limited budget, don't forget the classifieds in the back of the magazine. Classifieds can give great returns on your marketing investment. Remember, if you select this media, advertise regularly and test for financial results.

Some Additional Marketing Methods

- Stuffers to your customers that are delivered with your invoice to promote additional services or brand new services. Timely stuffers can generate additional revenue.
- Signs of all sizes: billboards, small outside signs, point-of-sale signs in retail stores, and signs on bulletin boards can generate revenue.
- Thank you cards
- Tradeshows
- Publicity announcements in your local newspaper
- Useful advertising specialty gifts (such as pens) imprinted with your company logo
- Sponsoring community events
- Donating charitable gifts to silent auctions in your company's name
- Advertising on service vehicles
- Advertising on uniforms
- Sales cards
- The yellow pages
- Advertising on shopping bags
- Window banners in retail stores
- Catalog advertising
- Seminars and demonstrations
- Speaking engagements
- Free sample program
- Trial offers
- Free online classified listings
- E-books

- Community activities, e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, charity boards, or a local Rotary club
- Gift certificates
- Hiring outside reps on straight commission
- Social networking—blogs, Twitter, article publishing

Tips for Creating Advertising that Sells

The following are some basic elements to include in the development of any advertisement.

1. The headline must attract attention and communicate the primary benefit of whatever you are selling. For example: “Crest White Strips for a brighter, whiter smile.” In a search for your main benefit, ask yourself what the product will do for your customer that the competition cannot. The best benefits motivate people to buy because they appeal to their emotions. Don’t confuse benefits with features. For example, a benefit of a skin lotion may be softer, younger looking skin while a feature may be a natural ingredient in the lotion.
2. The visual should support the claim made in the headline, illustrate the product in use, illustrate the end result of using the product or service. Before-and-after photos can also be effective.
3. If the design allows for a subheading, you can mention a secondary benefit or repeat the most important element of your copy. For example: “Hurry, reduced price for three days only.”
4. The copy is an important part of your sales message and deserves your attention. Typically an advertisement will require more effective copy when either the product is tougher to sell, you are facing more competition, or there is a desire to motivate a person to action.
 - a. The leading copy needs to support the headline by emphasizing how the products benefits will satisfy an important need.
 - b. You also need to support your claims with some type of proof. Consider using testimonials, credentials, endorsements or industry awards to back up your claims.
 - c. The closing copy needs to offer incentives to move the reader to action. Consider special pricing, limited time period or limited quantity. Guarantees are also an effective way to reduce the consumer’s fear of making a purchasing mistake.
 - d. Also consider using bulleting points to make the copy easier to read. Construct short sentences that are easy to read and include the word “you” often.
5. It is important that the design or overall look of the advertisement is attractive and easy for the eye to move through from the headline to the visual to the copy. When the visual supports the headline, you will want to spatially relate the two together. You will want to make sure there is enough white space in the ad so the eye can relax, easily moving through the advertisement without confusion.

6. As we have discussed earlier, it is important to clearly list in the advertisement several convenient avenues through which action can be taken, such as a return card on a direct mail piece, returning a coupon, referring action to your website, or a telephone number with convenient hours.
7. Always remember full process color will usually outsell black and white or a limited color promotional piece.

Win at Biz Checklist

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ✓ Have you successfully identified your target audience? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Have you successfully identified what your customers really want? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Have you completed a written, annual marketing plan? Does your marketing plan include identifying your brand and how you want to be perceived by your target market? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Does your marketing plan identify the touch points and necessary employee actions to be successful at developing the desired brand perceptions? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Does your marketing plan develop strategies to satisfy customer wants while simultaneously differentiating your company from the competition? Have you successfully matched the strengths of the various marketing medias and methods with your target audience? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Does your marketing program offer consistency, both in frequent investments in advertising appearances as well as the image and message of the advertising? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Do you have multi-functional marketing program that is consistent in developing prospects better than the competition? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Do you make it convenient for your customers to get information and make purchases in a variety of ways? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Does your marketing program offer personal attention to your customers to make them feel special? Is your brand strong enough to build customer loyalty that successfully protects you from competition? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Are your marketing strategies successful at creating word-of-mouth advertising? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Do you continue to market to your customers after the initial sale? Do you measure every marketing event for its financial return? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Do you get your employees involved in brand development and brand training? Do you have marketing strategies that generate customer referrals? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Does your marketing strategy and brand offer sales and delivery processes that satisfy customer wants better than the competition? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ✓ Are you more efficient than your competition at converting prospects into sales? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

About the Author

David Gabbert

Entrepreneur, business mentor and growth coach, David Gabbert helps business professionals, business owners, new startups, and students learn how to win at business. Self employed for forty-seven years, founder and owner of four million-dollar-plus businesses, and author of ten Win at Biz® business books, Dave offers free business articles about a variety of proven business strategies which compose the basic building blocks of starting and operating a successful business.

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- Book 1: Build a Successful Business Model
- Book 2: Develop Successful Marketing Strategies
- Book 3: Initiate Effective Financial Management Tools
- Book 4: Develop Efficient Business Processes
- Book 5: Hire the Right People
- Book 6: Train for Productivity
- Book 7: Motivate Your Employees
- Book 8: Build a Successful Sales Organization
- Book 9: Develop Effective Speaking and Listening Skills
- Book 10: Develop Successful Leadership Skills

Bonus Materials

Free with your Purchase of Book 1

- “If I Knew Then...”: Case Studies That Could Save Your Business
 - ✓ Developed from interviews with entrepreneurs who have founded businesses in the real world

Free with any Purchase

- A Calendar of Successful Thoughts
- Plus your Action Step Workbook, included with every e-book!