Creating a Successful Marketing Strategy

Sales and advertising are often associated with marketing. While these are important parts of marketing, there is a horde of other tools and tactics. These tools help to enhance your business’s attractiveness and customer visibility. Using these resources along with careful research and planning, help to yield a successful marketing strategy.

The key is to think of marketing not as a single action but rather a combination of steps designed to identify, attract and retain profitable customers, and to differentiate your business from the competition. It encompasses everything from your company name, logo, and service lines to advertisements, public relations, presence at trade shows, and community involvement. I encourage small businesses to develop a detailed marketing plan that is tailor made for their business.

While it’s helpful to use comparable businesses as a guide, what works for them may not be appropriate for you. Marketing strategies need to be tailored to your business and target customer base. To prepare yourself for marketing, create a detailed profile of your ideal prospect. As you create your marketing message, aim it at them and list the benefits they will receive. Be certain your marketing message highlights the special knowledge and expertise you offer.

Look for ways to make the buying process easier for your customers. What road blocks can you remove? Simplify everything; eliminate potential interruptions in the sales process and make decision-making as painless as possible for your customers.

Put your marketing budget in proper perspective. You might, for example, think of marketing as your ace-in-the-hole rather than merely a “cost.” Try to set a budget and a pace that lets you market continuously. Customer memories are short, and they are bombarded with thousands of marketing messages and images daily. Your effort must be ongoing or people will quickly forget.

Match your marketing to your primary market. If it’s a local market, then that’s where your marketing focus should be. Broadly focused advertising, for example, might be the wrong choice. Instead, consider marketing neighborhood-by-neighborhood.

A good place to find marketing help is the American Marketing Association’s Web site, MarketingPower.com. The site’s Best Practices section contains valuable guidance for small businesses in the areas of research, Internet marketing, advertising, public relations, customer service tips, and many others.
To learn more about marketing your small business, contact America’s free and confidential source of small business mentoring and coaching. SCORE is a nonprofit association of more than 12,000 experienced business folks throughout the U.S. who volunteer as mentors. We are "Counselors to America's Small Businesses."

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