Marketing Tips For A New Business

How does a brand new business decide on how to do marketing? A great informal discussion at a recent networking event was spurred by a young man that was preparing to start his business in a couple of months. He was using his networking skills very effectively by asking a wonderful “new business” question while chatting with a group of local small business CEOs. I listened and contributed to the exchange. Here are some ideas that emerged.

Marketing spreads the word about your new business to potential customers. It includes print and online advertising, direct mail, public relations, social media, word-of-mouth and more.

Start by creating a mission statement that succinctly and memorably expresses your business’s purpose, your target customers and what differentiates your business from the competition. For example, one person related that she was starting a children’s tutoring business, and her mission statement is, “Our mission is to help children grades K-12 reach their full potential through fun, individualized instruction that develops a lifelong love of learning.”

The next step is to develop a consistent brand identity for your company. Your brand is the “personality” of your business. Visual elements such as your logo, packaging and website design; your marketing copy; and even the marketing methods you use all help convey your brand. In the example above, the brand is educational, personalized, caring and fun. Warm, bright colors; friendly, conversational copy; and lively design will all help convey this brand.

To choose your marketing methods, ask yourself some key questions, like:

- Who are your target customers? (Are they businesses or consumers? What are their demographics?)
- What media do they use? (Do they read print newspapers or prefer online blogs? Which radio or TV stations do they tune in to?)
- Where do they normally buy products or services like yours? (Online or in stores? From big-box retailers or small independents?)
- How will you sell your product? (Online, by wholesaling to stores, through sales representatives?)
The answers to these questions, as well as your available time and budget, will determine what marketing methods work best for your website, business cards, mailers or sales letters, print or digital presentations, etc. You don’t have to develop these all at once; start small with what you need now.

Your SCORE mentor can help you fine-tune your mission statement and business brand, choose the perfect marketing methods for your startup and determine what marketing collateral you need to get started.

Invest in Your Image. If you want people to take your startup seriously, you must present a professional image. For example:

➢ Invest in professionally designed and printed business cards, brochures, fliers, letterhead and marketing materials.

➢ Get a full-service business mailbox. This gives your business a professional mailing address, as opposed to an obviously residential one like 22 Cherry Tree Lane. It also keeps important business packages and mail such as checks and bank statements safe when you’re away from home or out of town.

➢ Obtain a separate phone number for your business. Smartphones typically let you host more than one number on a phone.Record a professional message on your business voicemail. Use a different ringtone for your business line and always answer calls to that number in a professional manner.

➢ Set up a separate email address for your business. It’s best to use an email affiliated with your website domain (such as yourname@yourbusinessname.com), but using a Gmail address is widely accepted as well. Just make sure your email sounds professional, such as businessname@gmail.com, not blakefamily@gmail.com or kittylover123@gmail.com.

➢ If you sell or ship products, quality packaging makes a big difference in how customers perceive you. Pay attention to everything from the box your products ship in and the padding inside to the color and fonts of the label on the outside.

➢ There’s nothing less professional than losing an important document. Ensure you always have key data or customer files accessible by using cloud storage options to securely store your data online. OneDrive,
Dropbox and Google Drive are popular options for small business use. To protect yourself in case of a computer crash, invest in a backup solution that automatically backs up your computer data online; Carbonite, Mozy and SugarSync are popular with small and home businesses.

Last but not least, invest in yourself. If your new business involves meeting with clients, make sure you are well groomed, dress professionally and carry quality accessories. Also, keep the vehicle you use for business clean.

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