

Citibooks' Tips and Ideas on...

Marketing

Volume 1

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How to Give a Talk to Market Your Business

Sandra Schrift

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If they really want to learn what you shared with them, coaching is the benefit you provide. Use your speech to inspire them to learn more. Then let them know you can coach them, as individuals and groups, to actually “be” more.

When you have an opportunity to speak to a group for free or for a fee, they are not buying your speech . . . they are buying your solution that will fix their problem. Be coach-like in your presentation and demonstrate what it would be like to work with you as their coach.

You aren't talking about coaching. You are there to demonstrate coaching. Think of yourself as an expert who is addressing the audience's challenge and is providing “how to's” to solve their problem. Here is what some of my clients speak on: direct mail marketing, security issues in the workplace, how to lobby the government for your special interest, ethics in the workplace, follow your dreams, financial planning, a doctor and lawyer who want to speak about what is wrong with our healthcare system and how we can change that.

Begin each talk by asking yourself 3 questions.

1. What action do I want my audience to take after my speech?
2. What do they need to know to do this (content)?
3. What do they need to feel to do this (emotions)?

Remember, you will get hired as a coach for the power of your content, and get paid (or referrals) for your delivery!

To persuade an audience, we must get in touch with their feelings, and reveal that our own feelings are in harmony with theirs. When we can do that emotionally, and truthfully, we will have won their trust . . . and will get repeat business, referrals to new clients, and requests for coaching.

Remember to use stories about your clients so you can subtly remind your audience that you are a coach, and your clients are achieving what the audience would like to achieve.

In addition to platform speaking, you can also be a guest teleclass speaker, conduct your own teleclasses, provide a radio interview, start your own virtual university (I did in 1998 – Speakers University – which I still operate today)

Here are some of the hot topics:

1. Knowledge Management
2. Filling Multiple Roles in the workplace
3. Creating Change skill sets
4. Ethics in the workplace
5. Time/task management
6. Stress Management
7. Increasing worker/employee productivity
8. Blending people and organizations
9. Teamwork
10. Creativity
11. Leading, managing and surviving change
12. Diversity
13. Strategic Planning
14. Humor (as a stress handling technique)
15. Negotiations techniques
16. Handling difficult people
17. Conflict resolution

18.Communication Skills

19.Motivation

20.How to achieve Balance in your life

21.Health and Wellness (to do's)

22.Programs specific to women's issues and family issues.

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About the Author :

Sandra Schrift 13 year speaker bureau owner and now career coach to emerging and veteran public speakers who want to "grow" a profitable speaking business. I Join my free bi-weekly Monday Morning Mindfulness ezine schrift.com

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Building Sales by Building Credibility...

Tommy Yan

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I was counseling with a client on building trust through mailing. I suggested it's ten times more powerful to have his clients state his company's great assets rather than he claiming it himself. It's just more believable.

When you're looking to buy on eBay, you'd want to check the seller's credentials. Does she have happy customers? Are there any complaints? What do they say about the way she conducts transactions?

It's the same if you're a consultant, speaker, or coach wanting to charge higher fees. Nobody will want to pay you more unless they know you have satisfied customers.

When a prospect scans your website, brochure, one-sheet, or direct mail campaign, there is one fail-safe method to establish instant rapport: testimonials.

Why should they believe what you state in your mailing? How do they know you're for real? Who else has done business with you? All of these are concerns your prospects have.

Your testimonials may mean the difference between more sales and leads, or them tossing out your message. That's why infomercials broadcast them every five minutes. Moneymaking websites usually have at least one page dedicated to them. And good sales letters include them in the mix.

Which is why you need them in your marketing: to build trust and credibility, to dispel customer fear and anxiety, and to make lots of money.

What to do first...

1. Ask your clients or customers who have benefited from your product or service to give you a brief testimonial. Usually they're more than happy to help. But if they're stubborn, you may want to offer an ethical bribe by saying, "I'll take 15% off your next order," or "I'll include your name in a drawing for my \$500 workshop." And if they need help producing one, you can write one and have them approve it.

2. Make sure your testimonials are results oriented. Use specific numbers and amounts. For example, don't say, "I loved your tape album," or "Everyone thought you were a great speaker." These don't fly in this age of skepticism.

To increase trust use, "Your advice made me \$40,000 in new sales the first month. We're on target to gross over one million dollars in sales this year. Thanks for your direction."

3. Use a real name and contact information from your client. Don't use initials. It just screams phony. Include a full name, title, brand name, company, city, state (and if applicable), a photo, and a website URL.

4. Include a good mix of clients. Depending on your target market, using high-profile individuals exclusively may not be totally necessary. A testimony from a work-at-home mom in Kansas can sometimes win more favor from prospects than a stuffed shirt CEO from New York.

5. And if you publish a website, a great credibility booster is using audio or video testimonials. Nothing is more powerful than actual clients edifying you or your products for the entire world to experience.

Testimonials are one of the least expensive, most productive tools to add into your marketing arsenal. But most entrepreneurs and business owners either forget or include ineffective, watered-down statements. Or sometimes they're too lengthy or even go overboard in their praise.

But not you...

Follow these steps today to gain credibility in a skeptical marketplace, lower your prospect's force field, and get ready for a dramatic increase in sales and leads.

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About the Author :

Tommy Yan helps business owners and entrepreneurs make more money through direct response marketing. He publishes Tommy's Tease weekly e-zine to inspire people to succeed in business and personal growth. Get your free subscription today at www.TommyYan.com.

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Marketing - How and When?

John Sheridan

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There are many different marketing methods and ideas available to grow a business, and every business owner has their own tried, tested and preferred strategy. Marketing is one of the key ingredients for business success and comes in all shapes, sizes and prices, and contrary to what many may believe, creating effective marketing campaigns is no longer the sole domain of expensive advertising agencies and company think tanks.

The type or size of marketing program undertaken by a company is obviously relevant to the size of their advertising budget, so for large or multinational companies, the favoured option is usually a series of catchy television adverts or a nationwide poster campaign, both of which are extremely effective methods.

For smaller companies a television campaign could still be an option, but with a much smaller budget, the resulting adverts are likely to lack the impact of the more expensive productions enjoyed by larger organisations. However, a smaller budget does not necessarily mean a less successful campaign.

There are those that think champion networking events is the most effective way of getting their businesses noticed and bringing in new clients. Regular targeted leaflet drops is another favoured method; newspaper ads; company names on promotional items such as pens, key rings, mouse mats and calendars; national and local radio ads; website banners - the list goes on.

Start-ups and young businesses are understandably among the most cash-strapped when it comes to marketing, but it is these entrepreneurs that through necessity usually turn out to be the most resourceful and imaginative of all marketers.

A recent example of such an imagination is the runaway success of the Million-Dollar Homepage from the brain of young student Alex Tew. Created with the aim of making enough money to pay his way through college, the idea though fairly simple in its concept is still an exceptional example of innovative marketing the like of which only happens every once in a while.

Throughout every business year, there are the quiet times. Times when

productivity, sales or both take a noticeable turn for the worse and galvanise some companies into starting a marketing campaign in a belated bid to get the sales machine moving again.

What they should have realised is that marketing is not an activity to be rolled out only when it is quiet - marketing should be an ongoing programme regardless of good or poor sales figures. Buyers have so many options available to them that if they are not regularly reminded of a company's presence, they will simply forget they are there. Continuous marketing should ensure that the risk of that happening is significantly reduced.

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About the Author :

John Sheridan is a professional proofreader of hard copy items and website copy. He also writes web copy and occasionally accepts small copy-editing assignments. He can be contacted via: www.textcorrect.co.uk

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Success Strategies to Reach More Customers

Steve Martinez

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Reaching customers isn't as easy as it was twenty years ago. Twenty years ago, there were three ways to reach a customer.

1. US Postal Mail - Send customers a note or a letter.
2. Telephone - Call customers.
3. Sales Calls - Visit customers in their offices.

The Internet and digital technology changed business communications by adding the fourth method of communications.

4. Email Communications - Emails and text messages to customers

The Internet and digital technology changed the business world. The first introduction came with the Fax machine. The Fax machine did for communications what microwaves did for meal time. Everything became instant.

Unfortunately, many business owners and salespeople haven't adjusted to the changes in communications. Twenty years ago it was an era when most business people went out for errands, and driving somewhere took only a few minutes. Today, we have a major shift in our business culture. Many business people don't leave their offices during the day and many of them don't return phone calls.

Adjusting to Customer Communication Trends

We must adjust our communications to match customers and prospects preferences. Some customers will not return a telephone call but will answer an email in minutes. Most businesses don't send letters anymore which was popular a few decades ago and the dominant communication method.

Why telephone someone who won't return your telephone call? Write them an email and get the results you want. Instead of emailing some customers, send them a letter. A letter is a great method of reaching new prospects and a special way to thank clients for their business.

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About the Author :

Steve Martinez is the Founder of Selling Magic. His company makes selling easy - revolutionizing Sales Management by automating the sales process.

Subscribe to his ezine to Increase sales with the best practices of sales management at <http://www.sellingmagic.com>

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2 Step Marketing

Joy Gendusa

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Do it Right.

I receive postcards all the time. The other day I received a postcard trying to sell me a copy machine. It had tiny, tiny lettering slathered all over the front and a large portion of the back of the card.

It was extremely hard to read, so hard in fact that I threw it away.

Several days later I received a postcard with 32 words on it telling me that I could get complete information on unrestricted long distance telephone service for 5.5 cents a minute with no additional monthly fee by calling the 800 number on the card.

I did call. I got the information, had my questions answered and ordered my long distance service changed.

The company who offered me the long distance service was using a time tested 2 step selling process:

Step 1. Generate a lead - Get me to call their 800 number.

Step 2. Provide the requested information - Provided to me on the phone by one of their sales representatives, who was able to answer my questions and make me feel confident that I could save quite a bit of money on my long distance bill and that the service would be as good or better.

What's So Good About the 2 Steps?

It is much easier to create interest (a lead) than it is to get a person through an entire buying process (a sale).

You aren't getting the prospect or existing customer to part with any money just yet.

You can use postcards to inexpensively promote to your target prospects and customers and generate leads (inquiries about your products and services) to

then be followed up on and converted to sales.

This 2 step process also helps you to create a list of people who were interested enough in what you offered to contact you.

You can then recontact the one's who you didn't complete a sale with when they first inquired, preferably until they do buy from you.

IMPORTANT: Be sure to get the information you will need to recontact the people who responded to your postcard offering.

Repetitive follow-ups with the people who contacted you will result in increased sales. Make it a company policy to follow up with those people who contacted you about your products and services.

The Most Effective Use of Postcards:

The purpose of your postcard's message is to generate a sufficient level of interest in the mind of your prospect to get him/her to contact you to ask you about your offer.

You are generating interest, not collecting their money (not yet anyway). That is what the 2 step marketing process is about. Generating interested prospects and customers who contact you for more information.

Your message needs 3 parts to be most effective:

1. A clear statement of the biggest benefit of your product or service (in the long distance example, it was cost saving).
2. A good reason for them to contact you **NOW**.
3. A simple, easy way for them to respond (an 800 number for example).

Your message should be short and to the point. Short messages on postcards produce more leads than long ones.

For example:

Call xxx-xxxx-xxxx for Your Copy of Our Free Report:

What 99% of Business Owners Don't Know and Will Never Find Out About Using Postcards to Explode Their Profits

Offer ends x-x-xxxx (Print a date 3 weeks from your mailing date to create some urgency)

Lots of people will respond to find out what they might not know. Don't forget, they responded, by having some interest on the information you have created a curiosity about.

This method works and is sure to produce a large number of inquiries if sent to your proper market.

This 2 Step Marketing Process Works.

Use the tips you have read here to create your next postcard's message and see what happens.

You will generate a bunch of leads from people who are truly interested in your products and services.

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About the Author :

Joy Gendusa founded PostcardMania (www.PostcardMania.com) in 1998, her only assets a computer and a phone. By 2005 the company did over \$12 million in sales, employed over 100 people and made Inc. Magazine's prestigious Inc 500 List.

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Selling to the Bottom Line

C.J. Hayden

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"Every person who has ever started a business, I imagine, thought he had a good idea. It's the smart person, and the rare person, who tries to find out the most important thing: do other people think it's a good idea?"

-- Bernard Kamoroff, author of "Small-Time Operator"

If you've ever wondered why more people don't respond to your sales attempts and marketing messages, here's the first place to look -- are you selling something that people are willing to spend money on?

It can be hard enough to get your marketing message heard and work your way toward closing a sale when you're offering a product or service that prospects already know will help them. But if you also have to educate prospective customers about why it's worth their while to buy what you are selling in the first place, you are fighting an uphill battle.

A student in one of my classes proposed an idea to sell financial counseling services to college students. He reasoned that more and more young people were incurring massive amounts of debt and declaring bankruptcy. Obviously, the need in the marketplace was there, right? But when I asked him if students thought they needed financial counseling, his immediate answer was no. They had other concerns and ignored their finances, which was why he thought they needed him.

Right there is the catch. He thought they needed him; they didn't think so. The vast majority of buyers -- whether they are individual consumers or buying on behalf of a business -- only purchase products and services that solve a problem they have already defined. If you are the one who has to tell them that they have a problem in the first place, you have a pretty tough sale ahead of you.

In fact, your customers not only have to know they have a problem, they have to be willing to spend money to solve it.

A client of mine was marketing her services to companies to help them build community partnerships. She knew that many corporate donors were choosing to sponsor one nonprofit instead of spreading their donations around. But

finding the right fit for a sponsorship was hard. She tried to sell companies on her ability to locate appropriate nonprofits and help establish relations. But they weren't buying. They knew they had a problem, but weren't willing to pay to fix it.

So it's not enough that people want what you offer, it has to be something they will spend money to get. And very importantly, they must also be able to justify that purchase to themselves and others. This is where you can provide exactly what your prospective clients need to make a buying decision.

Let's take as an example a life coach who tells clients he can help them find more passion in life. The prospect tells a friend: "I'm thinking about hiring a life coach to help me discover more passion in my work." The friend is skeptical, and says: "Sounds a little vague to me. If I were you, I'd spend my money on taking those art classes you keep talking about." The client has been unable to justify the purchase and she is now having second thoughts.

But what if the same coach told the prospect he could help her find a new job? When the friend asks for details, the prospect, briefed by the coach, responds: "He says he can partner with me to help me seek out the opportunities that match what I'm really looking for, and stay motivated while I'm looking." A much more likely response from the friend now is: "Sounds like it could be helpful. What's the coach's name?"

What the coach has done in the second case is sold to the client's bottom line. He has offered a result that not only the client, but her friend, seem willing to spend money on. He has also given her the language to explain his solution and justify the purchase to both her friend and herself. In fact, the nature of the work he ends up doing with this client may be exactly the same as it would have been when he offered her "passion." The difference is that the sale just got much easier.

The more concrete you can be about the results clients can expect, the more likely they are to buy. And the closer your offer is to a result that is already in their budget, the easier your sale becomes. When selling to organizations, these factors become even more critical. Every purchase has to be justified to a boss or a board, and if it's not in the budget, your sale may have to wait for next year.

One of my clients was marketing herself as a facilitator. In her sales pitch to corporate clients, she talked about her experience and produced glowing testimonials. But all her hard work produced only a few contracts. Then she

began marketing her facilitation in the form of team-building retreats. All of a sudden, organizations that had no need for "facilitation" were eager for "team-building," and in some cases already had that need defined in their training budget.

The key to selling to your client's bottom line is knowing what that is. Ask the people in your target market not just what their problems and goals are, but where they have spent money in the past. A client who has worked with a massage therapist is a likely prospect for chiropractic. A company that has hired graphic designers is probably a good target for communications consulting. Get to know your market's spending habits and you will know better how to sell to them.

In every communication, talk about the specific results you deliver and the amount of value you provide. When you can assign an economic benefit to making a purchase, you increase the likelihood of a sale. This is why finding a new job sells better than finding passion, and helping a company make teams more productive attracts more buyers than helping them run a meeting. If clients believe you can either help them make money or save it, working with you can pay for itself.

When you are selling a product or service with no definable value -- for example, you can help to improve a person's quality of life or a company's work environment -- be aware that you may have a tougher sale than when your offer can be translated into currency. Look for how you can describe your value in the most tangible terms possible, and be prepared to spend some time educating your customers before they will become willing to buy.

Selling to the bottom line may require no changes at all to what you do, just a change to how you talk about it. "Nice-to-have" products and services may generate interest, but "got-to-have" ones generate sales.

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About the Author :

C.J. Hayden is the author of Get Clients Now! Thousands of business owners and salespeople have used her simple sales and marketing system to double or triple their income. Get a free copy of "Five Secrets to Finding All the Clients You'll Ever Need" at <http://www.getclientsnow.com>

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Benefits: The Jedi's Secret Weapon...

Tommy Yan

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I gave a talk on Features versus Benefits to a business group. When asked if anyone knew what they were, only one hand went up. Which is normal because business professionals rarely receive this training. But ask a marketing consultant or a copywriter what they were—they'd know.

Or would they?

I wouldn't bet on it. But don't allow that to keep you from recognizing the difference between Features and Benefits. Then you'd know exactly if you were hiring a genuine marketing expert—or a hack.

Here's the difference in a nutshell...

Anytime you talk about you, your company, your products, or your services: those are features. Anytime you mention what your prospect gets from you, your company, your products, or your services: those are benefits.

The hack will recite some story they memorized from a one-day marketing workshop they attended because they get a day off from the office. You've probably seen the promotions for those. The versatile trainer speaks about Diversity on Monday, Customer Service on Tuesday, Marketing on Wednesday, Sensitivity on Thursday, and has a hard time paying bills by Friday.

The expert transforms features into benefits, deeper benefits, and even ultimate benefits. Let's take a closer look...

Say you went to Home Depot to buy a drill bit. The problem is, when you were sleeping the night before, you weren't dreaming of buying a drill bit. What you really wanted was a hole in the wall.

The hole is the benefit. The drill bit is the feature.

But the drill bit distributors will disagree. They want to educate the public on how well their drill bits are built. How unique those tungsten carbide tips are. And why the shank sizes are important.

On the other hand, the consumer wants to know if she will be able to hang her Monet, put up shelves, or secure cabinets quickly. She's not interested in how long those tips last or that stunning drill bit chart on the manufacturer's website. She wants to know how she will benefit from buying those drill bits.

How does this serve you?

Take a look at your mailers, brochures, and websites. Anytime it mentions anything about you, your prospect is not interested. Anytime it mentions what they will get, they're interested.

Believe it or not—they're not concerned about your pretty graphics, corporate letterhead, or expensive logo. If you haven't addressed their wants, needs, and desires—you've lost them. They'll dismiss you like they have so many others.

As I'm writing this, I just received a voicemail for a free analysis of my phone system. They left their company name and phone number. I'm sorry, but that's not enough to get me excited about the analysis. Not even a free one. They haven't identified one benefit. They've wasted my time as well as theirs.

There's no such thing as a free lunch. Unless you're in a government program. Even the offers for a free credit report are tied to some subscription deal.

What's happening today?

The dark side of the Force is dominating the war in the marketing empire. They employ mindless clones to get their messages across. Only a few thinking Jedis stand in their way.

If you want to become a Jedi marketer, you must master the Force. And resist the seductive dark side.

Resist the urge to brag about your company, your products, or your services. Show your prospect how you can solve their problem with what you offer. Paint the picture of what they'll get in your marketing promotions. Then you'll be on your way to becoming a Jedi.

Let's take a look from another angle...

Scan most pieces of mail and you'd swear Og Advertising Agency produced them. Browse most websites and you'd conclude Igor Web Design Firm built

them. And read most company newsletters and you'd testify Schmuck Publishing wrote them.

Am I being brutal?

Yes. Brutally honest...

Because the majority of the marketing messages you read either clobber you in the head with their features (company name, product or service)—or they hide those features in-between expensive graphics. Or their messages are so bland and sterile: you're fighting to keep your head from crashing on your desk and saliva from dribbling down your chin.

Do they have it backwards?

No, not backwards. They've got it all wrong. Period.

Most marketing pieces lead with company features, support it with more features, and close with even more features.

The consumer continues to scratch his head wondering when they will talk about what concerns him, what he wants, and what he gets.

The Star Wars Solution...

Here's how to grab more business than you've ever had: Lead with consumer benefits—follow with company features.

Instead of saying, "This house has vinyl windows," ... say, "You'll save money on energy and enjoy easy maintenance with vinyl windows."

The vinyl window is a feature. What your prospect gets from the vinyl window is a benefit. Now that was easy.

In your promotions, show them how they will benefit in your headline. Continue adding more benefits throughout your body copy supported by company features. Then close with features such as your contact information.

Lead with consumer benefits, support them with company features and you'll create a stronger pulling marketing piece, get more sales, and generate more leads. You'll also answer your prospect's favorite question, "What's in it for

me?"

May the Force be with you.

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About the Author :

Tommy Yan helps business owners and entrepreneurs make more money through direct response marketing. He publishes Tommy's Tease weekly e-zine to inspire people to succeed in business and personal growth. Get your free subscription today at www.TommyYan.com.

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Basic Marketing Dope

Joy Gendusa

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Sometimes the simplest data is the best. Marketing is not complex if you know the basics - that's true with anything by the way. Here are some tools that are brilliantly simple and with them you really won't have to sweat the small stuff.

Hot Dope #1) The more that your potential customers see your name in front of them, the more likely they are to call your number (and not someone else's) when they need the services you offer.

Many marketing efforts go unrewarded, not because they were off target but simply because they weren't given enough of an opportunity to work. Showing your TV commercial one time, running an ad in the newspaper once, or doing one mailing of postcards may not be enough to grab and keep the audience's attention.

Get your name out there, do it on a regular basis and people will remember you when they need someone in your line of business. Actually, this particular "Hot Dope" cannot be stressed enough - and failure to adhere to it is the #1 reason new businesses fail.

You should also know that taking the time to really see which pieces will generate the response you want will pay off. Don't just totally give up when a response is low - persistence is vital.

Hot dope # 2) Measure your Return On Investment (ROI) in terms of actual MONEY not response rate. An advertising vehicle is working when the MONEY that it brings in has more value than the MONEY and time that is spent on the marketing.

Don't fall into the trap of becoming discouraged by a small number of callers responding to a large number of pieces. If you spend several hundred dollars to be in the view of a few thousand possible leads, it may only take a few customers responding for you to make enough of a profit for this type of marketing to be valuable. The usefulness of any vehicle can only be determined after the amount of income generated by the promotion has been calculated. If you spend 1/5 of what you generate or generate 5 times what you spend, your campaign was successful.

Hot dope #3) It is much easier to "sell" a prospect once you get them to call or come in to your store. In 2-Step Marketing, step 1 is to get them interested; step 2 is having them speak to a representative to get all the details - and get "closed" by that representative.

Your design must be eye catching and informative, but don't try to close the sale by explaining all of the details in one piece of advertising. The details of a business transaction often take many more words to explain than the main concept of what is being sold. For example, if your company offers great prices depending on the quantity purchased, there is no need to list the prices for every quantity that you sell. Simply give examples of two or three different quantities and state somewhere in the advertisement that other discounts are available for other quantities. This will prompt them to call to get the rest of the details once you have gotten their interest.

Marketing can be as simple as 1-2-3 when you know the basics. By no means have I given you all the basics here, but by learning and implementing these 3 marketing fundamentals, you are already on your way to marketing success!

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About the Author :

Joy Gendusa founded PostcardMania (www.PostcardMania.com) in 1998, her only assets a computer and a phone. By 2005 the company did over \$12 million in sales, employed over 100 people and made Inc. Magazine's prestigious Inc 500 List as one of the 500 fastest growing companies in the nation. She attributes her explosive growth to her ability to choose incredible staff and her innate marketing savvy.

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Small Business Marketing Solution - A Brand Check Up

Craig Lutz-Priefert

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Nearly every small business needs a Brand Check Up. Certainly most of your competitors do, but most won't invest the time and effort. Here's your chance to get ahead of them. Remember, successful small business marketing can be understood as a triangle containing three essential elements: Brand, Package, and People.

Brand is your company's identity. But as a small business owner your view of your company is just too intimate to be objective. You need to pull together the view of others both outside and inside your company.

Below are 15 words. Please circle the top 3 that describe your business:

Quality, Caring, Value, Speed, Cheap, Fair, Good, Fast, Dependable, Expensive, Friendly, Loyal, On-Time, Convenient, Honest.

Okay, after you list your top three, then it's time to get this list in front of your customers in the form of a survey. A half-sheet of paper with legible type works wonders. Wording can be optional, but a suggestion is: "Please help rate us. Circle the top three of the following words that describe our company."

Oh, and don't forget to supply a pencil.

But before you send it out to the customers, do something your competitors never would dream of--discover the "view from the inside". Distribute this Brand Check Up to five or ten of your employees. Please make sure they don't compare notes with each other. Also, it's wise to select as random a sample of your employees as possible. Don't just limit it to management and supervisors. And, your Brand Check Up won't be accurate if you only hand it out to sales and customer service. Put this survey in the hands of some of your staff who don't typically have front-line customer contact. These people are ultimately responsible for client satisfaction; they create the end-product for your customers.

Get the Brand Check-Up in the hands of the man that sweeps your floors and the woman that cleans your bathroom. Give it to the person that handles the

bookkeeping and the person who locks up every night. If you outsource some of these functions then ask the company you contract the work with to fill out your Brand Check Up.

Remember--no comparing notes. Some of you small business owners may need to tell your employees that nobody's being tested.

Gather these completed surveys and then tally up your scores. There's no right or wrong here; no master answer key locked inside the teacher's desk. Just see what your employees and maybe even some of your vendors think about your company.

Next, get this survey in front of twenty or thirty or forty of your customers. Again, the goal is to collect a random sampling, but the main thing is to just make sure you get the surveys completed.

Then, compare the answers. Where do the customers agree with each other? Where do they agree with your employees? Where do the two groups disagree? Remember, this is only a start; a place you can build from. Like any good check up, the Brand Check Up will be part of an on-going process in keeping your small business healthy.

Remember, that Brand Banner you want everybody to carry for you? This quick survey exercise will provide you a snapshot of what it looks like, right now.

A Brand Check-Up doesn't need to be involved or expensive. Look for 80/20 results, gather business intelligence about your small company, and then use this new awareness of your company's Brand as you move forward with your marketing. Knowledge is power; power you can use to out-market your competitors.

Remember: People (customers and employees) + Package (your Face to the Customer) + Brand (who you are) = Marketing Success.

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About the Author :

Craig Lutz-Priefert is President of [Marketing Hawks](#), a firm providing essential marketing vision for small business. Marketing Hawks also sponsors the ongoing small business adventures of entrepreneur Crystal Trino at the [JourneyToday](#) website.

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At one point or another, you're probably heard that “marketing” is the key to successful business. “If you're not marketing, you're not in business.” Or, perhaps more harshly . . . “If you're marketing your business, you'll soon be out of business!” But something you may not realize is that “marketing” is not just about advertising and sending out smoke signals to bring in customers. At the heart of it, marketing is simply about effective communication to get what you want. This is an essential skill not only for running a business, but also for being successful in all aspects of life. If you can effectively “sell” your ideas to the masses - or even just to your smug boss - you could stand to make a lot of money. Your ideas will earn more respect. Your confidence will grow, and as a result, your credibility among your co-workers will skyrocket.

Want to strengthen your relationship with your spouse? Communication + Getting What You Want = Marketing.

Need to train the dog not to sleep on the furniture? Yup, that's “marketing” too.

Solid communication is essentially the key to the door of success - in all aspects of your life. But for now, “back to business,” so to speak. It's agreed that in order to reach as many potential clients as possible, every business - large or small - needs to establish a well thought out marketing plan. There are as many ways to market as there are businesses. Just to mention the most general categories, there's Internet/web, radio/TV, print ads (magazines, newspapers, industry journals, etc), and direct mail (postcards, flyers, etc). There are specific techniques and methods that apply to each of these methods, as well as different “tweaks” that would be employed for each type of business or product. Still, there are basic concepts behind marketing that always apply, regardless of the company type or marketing method. Take a good look at these established “do's and don'ts” list. There are probably at least a few tips below that you can incorporate into your business practice immediately to increase your marketing effectiveness.

Grab Your Potential Client's Attention

Perhaps more than ever before, people are distracted and have a short attention span. Use a compelling, involving image to your advantage. If you're creating a marketing piece with text, make sure to “sell” the reader with your first

sentence. The first sentence of anything you write - whether that is an email subject line, an opening to a promotional letter or the headline of an online ad - is the most important part of the whole piece. After all, if the customer never starts reading, they're zero chance of them reading anything that comes afterwards! When there's a lot of text, it's not the reader's job to stay interested and keep reading - it's your job to grab their attention and keep it. When in doubt, cut text down! Never make it longer than it needs to be. Don't overload your potential customer or client with extra information and data in a business card, post card, flyer, or radio ad.

Keep It Personal

“Dear Friend, I have to tell you a secret. People yearn for personal, one-on-one contact. I think they want to be treated as unique individuals.” Did the above statement hit you a little differently than the rest of this article? If so, you can see that in anything you write - even an Internet ad - you should make your potential customer feel special. There are many ways to do this. In email or letter correspondence you could use a personal greeting, or their name (if you know it). Or, you can make the customer feel like they're part of a very special, small group. No one wants to feel like just another face in the crowd!

Make It Clear What You Want Your Customer To Do

While none of us are likely to admit we like to be told what to do, in reality, it works well for advertising and marketing. We like our advertising to tell us exactly what our best option is. It's your responsibility as a marketer to command your reader. Tell them exactly what you want them to do.

“Order now by clicking here...”

“Get started today by calling...”

“Call your personal consultant right now...”

And, here's a related idea. Americans love choices - in fact, we're used to having too many choices in our land of plenty. Perhaps you have stood confused in the aisle of the supermarket, trying to decide which of the hundreds of kinds of cold medicines to buy. A similar “paralysis of analysis” can happen to your customer if you offer too many options in your marketing. Don't risk confusing your customer by putting too many attractive choices in an ad. You run the risk of inviting your potential client to ponder which one is best, and the result in no choice/sale at all. Whatever it is that you want your reader to do, make sure you tell them - in plain English.

Be Accessible

Have you ever seen an advertisement or come across a website that promoted a

service or product you were interested in? But, when you went to find a phone number, physical address, or email contact, it was hard to locate. If you're the impatient type, you might have even gone to a competitor instead! Don't be that "hard to contact" business. Always include an e-mail address, a phone number, and any other critical contact information in easy-to-spot locations on all of your printed documents, your website, or any other marketing pieces.

Be Honest

We humans are funny creatures... we won't do much of anything if we don't trust someone. You need to build that trust through your advertising, through your communication and through your support. But you don't always have the ability to build a lot of trust in one specific marketing piece. So, you need to work extra-hard to establish this critical "relationship" between your company and the customer. Your claims should always be believable. You simply can't trick someone into buying something (well, you don't want to at least). Most savvy consumers can sniff out a scam. If you're going to make claims in your marketing, back them up with facts or proof.

Get Emotional

We'd all like to think of ourselves as highly rational and intelligent beings. But . . . the fact remains that it's our emotional side that often spurs us into action. Design your marketing to invoke your target customer's emotions. Firing up feelings of desire, curiosity, hope, fear, surprise, respect, humor, or even anger can make your message (or what you want them to do - #3 from above) that much more powerful and memorable.

Show Them How You Can Improve Their Lives

A related way to really connect with your potential client in marketing is to show them how your service can make their lives better. It all comes down to a "problem - solution" approach to ad creation. Before starting any marketing campaign, you should first consider these simple questions:

- What are my customers' problems?
- How does my service solve those problems?

Remember, you're still relying on basic human emotions. We all have real problems, and we carry them with us through our day. So by employing the "problem - solution" marketing method, you appear to present a perfectly rational argument. But, when the customer sees the benefit, it produces an emotional response of "wow, that would be really great!" or "that's just what I need at the end of a long day . . .", etc.

Don't Self-Promote Yourself and Neglect the Customer

It's fine to give the client compelling reasons to spend money with you. But if your marketing campaign brags about the size of your operation, how your product blows away the competition, focuses on your company growth, and doesn't once mention how much your product or service benefits the customer, you're possibly ignoring - and insulting - the very people your ad is targeting.

Consumers typically want the following two things in order to spend money:

- Be shown a solution to a problem they have, (or make them aware of that problem)
- Be offered an attractive solution

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About the Author :

Russ Dalbey has authored dozens of best-selling books and articles on the cash flow business. He is the CEO and founder of The Dalbey Wealth Institute who also holds a record in the Guinness Book of World Records for cycling.

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