

Top Ten Marketing Tips

At one point of 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.

1. 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.

2. 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!

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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 to that problem

Provide compelling reasons that your business provides the best way to address that problem, and acknowledge the customer's belief that they are the most important part of the business transaction. Do this well, and your marketing efforts are sure to be a hit.

9. Follow up!

Don't assume that a customer remembers what you discussed last week, or that they received (and actually read) that pretty sales flier you mailed out a month ago. If your business deals with a limited number of clients with highly personalized service, consider calling them a week later.

Or, if you have hundreds or thousands of people in your leads list, mail a follow-up marketing piece or email that reminds them of the special offer you made previously.

One of the cornerstones of marketing is repetition. And, you will often be rewarded for going the extra step to remind a customer of what an incredible offer you extended to them previously.

Sometimes, that additional contact is all it takes to convert a consumer who is on the fence with a "hmm, I like this, but

I'll decide later" mindset into a "I shouldn't put this off any further – I need to do this now" customer.

Use the above eight tips to make your "pitch" compelling – then help your customer to take the next step in completing the buying process.

10. Monitor and adjust your marketing.

You've invested both time and effort you're your marketing strategy. Maybe you're CONVINCED it's the best campaign possible. But don't be "sold" on the merits of your own work and ideas. Take a hard look at the results, track how your marketing performs over a period of time (don't make a decision to change things too quickly) and be open to making adjustments if necessary.

It might be worth hiring an outside consultant to review your campaign and results. It's better to have to spend more money retooling your marketing program into something that brings positive results than to keep pushing out a weak or ineffective message, or the right message by the wrong channels of communication.