

## 5 Marketing Mistakes Small Businesses Make and How to Avoid Them

Over the past week, I have attended several small-business marketing-seminars because it's time to develop my yearly marketing plan. My goal is to find simple techniques that I can immediately implement to sharpen my marketing efforts. I want to share with you what I have learned so far.

### **Mistake #1: Your marketing looks like everyone else's.**

Take a close look at your marketing (brand, logo, letterhead, and ads). Put yourself in the buyer's shoes. How does your marketing differ from your competition? Try something different. For example, if everyone's ad is color, try a full page, black and white ad.

### **Mistake #2: Your marketing is not persuasive.**

Your ads focus on your company or service instead of focusing on your customer. Give your customers a reason to buy from you. Does your message communicate a clear benefit or solution? How are you different, or unique, or better than your competition? Compare your services to your competition and focus on differentiating yourself. For example, customers should shop at your store because they will save time and money.

### **Mistake #3: Your marketing lacks a clear and consistent identity.**

Do you know what you stand for? Look at all of your collateral (ads, brand, letterhead, logo, business cards, brochures, and website). Is the message clear and consistent? What would a customer say about your company after examining your collateral collectively? The message should be a benefit or value. For example, "sleep better" is a benefit and clear message for a mattress company.

### **Mistake #4: You don't offer customers a low-risk way of getting to know your company or service.**

Customers do business with people they know and trust. Give your customers a way to get to you know without investing a lot time and money. Try one of these low-risk introductions:

1. Free newsletter or e-zine: post them online or submit to publications such as [www.EzineArticles.com](http://www.EzineArticles.com)
2. Free e-course or special Report
3. Speaking engagements

4. Tele-seminars and webinars
5. Free consultation

**Mistake #5: You stop marketing once you have made a sale.**

Marketing is a year-round effort. Consider the length of your sale cycle. How many days (or weeks, or months) does it take to move a contact from prospective client to satisfied client? In my business it takes about three weeks. If I don't continually work to keep my pipeline filled with prospective clients, then I will have to wait three weeks to get paid again. For me and my family, that's too long to go without an income. As a business owner, you will wear two full-time hats (probably more); you must market your business and you must service your existing clients. If you neglect either job, your business will suffer. Develop a daily marketing tasks list and keep track of your progress.

Addressing any one of these marketing mistakes, should enable your business to attract clients faster.

Don't keep this information a secret; please pass it to a friend.

Here's to a prosperous 2006!

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