

I wrote this handbook because my passion is making sure that you, as a small business owner have the tools to market your business correctly, right out of the gate.

The best ideas executed incorrectly however, are useless and a waste of your time and money. Sometimes just a simple tweak to your existing effort is all it will take to drive revenue through your door and make your business shine.

Here is what I mean:

A local restaurant I frequent attempted to implement an email campaign by providing customers with a free drink incentive upon signup. The wait staff put a fancy, printed signup card in with the bill. Great idea. The problem? The signup card was a business-card sized piece of paper that couldn't fit my email address and it was also coated on both sides resulting in smudged and unreadable email addresses (I never received one of their emails.) The solution? Easy. A larger piece of paper, on uncoated stock. Something they could have done themselves at no cost on their own desktop printer.

When I purchased my condo I received a beautiful oversized postcard mailing with a photo of a swimming pool. They offered me several hundred dollars in incentives to install a pool in my new home. Looked fabulous. The problem? I live in a high rise condo. I don't think my downstairs neighbor would appreciate a swimming pool installed on my terrace! The solution? Eliminate addresses containing a unit designation (which 99% of the time means this is not a single family home.) If that business owner had had the benefit that you now hold in your hands, they could have made sure they weren't sold a bad list.

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So how can a small business get it right without spending a fortune? Follow these simple steps:

Never, EVER let anyone else register or own your website domain name.

This is a TERRIBLE mistake. I recently worked with a client who let someone else register her domain name for her and this person registered it in his own name. Therefore, my client couldn't use her own business's name as her web address. We had to work around this when creating a new site as the URL was being held hostage. While it may seem convenient to let someone handle it for you, it takes 10 minutes and will save you much aggravation down the road. You will, of course, have to set up log-in access and passwords with your hosting company for your web designer to load your site, but you can always change these once this is done.

Put on your “customer hat” and be sure your site is easy to use. Don't make things hard to find. More than two clicks to get somewhere within your site will drive visitors away. Use words that speak to them and are not technical. For example, I had a client whose website was built with no marketing input. The result? A clumsy site that assumed visitors knew the name of the product they were searching for, rather than allowing for a true search by function. Bad mistake. They lost a lot of business and once corrected, it made a big difference to their bottom line.

Leave no stone unturned. Another time, I was asked to rewrite a website. Once I began the project I read through the less popular sections, including their Refund Policy. I discovered that after reading through three pages of instructions, their last paragraph listed all the products that could not be returned. Imagine you are their customer and just read all those details, only to discover the product you had couldn't even be returned! Needless to say that wasn't customer friendly. I rewrote it so that those non-returnable items were right up front. I also came to find out that they had been getting calls to their toll-free number about return instructions and then customers would get irate when told their items couldn't be returned. This small change

Once onsite at the show, have a container or basket available for business cards. Collect business cards by asking for them (“Would you like to drop in your business card?”) If it makes sense for your business, create a raffle and have prospects enter to win something. If not, then ask if they’d like to receive company material, such as a newsletter.

Make your booth as friendly and approachable as possible. I learned this the hard way by not doing so. Don’t block entry with a table as a barrier. Consider a tall table with bar stools so prospects can sit and talk with you.

Here are some easy, affordable ways to make the most out of leads you will get from the Trade Show (that cost a lot of money, time and organizational effort to obtain):

Staff the booth with only your best employees or representatives. If you can have back up with you at the show this frees you up to walk the floor, conduct meetings and network. However, too I often see staff text messaging, reading and NOT paying attention to or greeting people who came by their booth. If you don’t have employees, bring a trusted friend who has your best interests at heart.

Quickly follow up. Within two weeks make a phone call, send an email or do something to say “it was nice to meet you” message. Send an email newsletter saying “Thank you for stopping by” and “Here are our new products.” Short, sweet and very effective.

Strategize before you go. Have a plan in place to handle the leads. Depending upon the size of your organization, the follow up task should either be turned over to sales/marketing or an administrative support person who will get it done.

Never underestimate the power of perception. If you are selling an expensive Business to Business solution, your organization’s reputation is very much on

Practice

Turn 3 features of your product/service into benefits

For example, “weighs less than a pound” = “lightweight and portable”

Feature

Benefit

1 _____ / _____

2 _____ / _____

3 _____ / _____

Once you know the benefits (why people buy) you're ready to begin marketing effectively!

Remember: Needs are finite, desires are infinite!