

# 193 Creative Marketing Ideas

Unique, original, low-cost marketing tips to grow your small business, retail store, or freelance business!

Copyright © 2002, Sam Decker

# Chapter 1

## Advertising

### **1. Advertising media options for national advertiser:**

- Bulk e-mail advertisement lists
- Card packs
- Catalog advertising
- Co-op direct mail
- Inside other people's products
- Coupon books
- Direct mail
- Inside Stores
- Internet & online advertising
- Local and regional publications
- National association publications
- National business newspapers
- National magazines and newspapers
- Newsletters
- Outdoor advertising (buses, benches, taxis, billboards, airport terminal, shopping mall display, telephone booths, train stations, subways, etc.)
- Package inserts
- Television and radio
- Trade journals
- Trade shows
- Web pages

### **2. Advertising media options for local or regional advertiser:**

- Advertiser sponsored maps of the city
- Chamber of Commerce publications
- Co-op advertising

- Direct mail
- Coupon books
- Internet & online advertising
- Local magazines
- Local trade associations publications
- Local trade shows
- Local Web pages
- Midair media (Plane banner, blimp, sky writing)
- Newspapers
- Outdoor advertising (buses, benches, taxis, billboards, subways, etc.)
- Television and radio stations
- Visitor/tourist guides in motels
- Yellow pages

**3. Find bargains in advertising with radio stations' "Run of Station" and newspapers' "Run of Paper."**

This means that the station or paper runs your ad whenever they have open space or time. On radio, that might mean very early in the morning or late at night. For newspapers, it might mean you don't get to choose when your ad runs or the placement. When the publication is at deadline, rather than filling an empty space with filler copy, they can place your ad there for a bargain price.

Also, look for identical ads appearing twice in a publication. Sometimes a magazine or newspaper will run an ad in a second spot for free if there's an empty space at press time. Talk to the ad manager and offer to pay 50% of the published rate when one of those empty spaces comes up in the future. Send them your ad and a check so they are ready to run your ad when they're at deadline. (For a free brochure on buying remnant ad space, call 800-225-3457)

**4. In your advertising message, create a twist a popular news story, movie, or theme.**

Ivar's Inc., a Seattle-based seafood chain, entertained the hometown crowd with a television commercial parody of the movie "Dances with Wolves." The Ivar's commercial, "Dances with Clams," attracted national media attention when the film's distributor threatened legal action if the spot wasn't pulled.

**5. Store your business cards everywhere so you're ready to hand them out anytime.**

Keep your cards in your wallet, organizer, briefcase, your car, your spouses' car, in the office, home office, and by the front door. Hand them out generously. Stick them in your paid bills, give them to waitresses, taxi drivers, etc. Post your business card wherever you go...grocery store bulletin boards, apartment buildings, college campus boards, etc.

**6. Hire high-school kids to distribute flyers or door-hangers to homes in your target area.**

You could even personalize each door hanger. For example, Jerry Fisher (jerry228@aol.com), a free-lance copywriter, wrote a concrete company's doorhanger that read, "Your sunken slab at 848 is in need of a lift!" The "848" was handwritten in an empty space which was the house number to that door.

**7. Advertise through your voice mail message.**

Make your phone message or voice mail says something about your business or latest sale. When people call during closed hours, this may be your only opportunity to tell them about your products or services.

**8. Hire students to place flyers or cards on windshields of cars.**

You can target your prospects on the basis of a vehicle's model, age, style, price, and location. For example, a car wash or detailer might target cars that are dirty but expensive. A bowling alley might target family cars such as vans and station wagons. A windshield repair shop would look for cars with cracks in the windshield.

Since windshield flyers can be an annoyance to some car owners, offer something of value on the flyer, like a discount coupon for your product or service, or perhaps a freebie just for coming in. You could also use small business cards as coupons to put under the windshield. They are easier to hang on to, cheaper to print, and environmentally friendly.

**9. Create interesting, custom-designed placemats for local restaurants that display your ad (and others).**

Approach owners of several cafes, sandwich shops, and pizza parlors to offer free placemats for their tables and trays. Design them with your company name, information and a coupon on the mats. You could also include other businesses' coupons on the placemats and share the cost of printing the placemats.

*A partner and I created "The Treasure Mat" for local restaurants in San Luis Obispo, CA. Several cafes, sandwich shops, and restaurants agreed to put these placemats in their trays and on their tables, giving our advertisers a distribution of about 100,000 per quarter.*

**10. Insert sales material into the packaging of other non-competing companies' products that are sold to your target market.**

For example, if you're a local produce reseller, you may ask the local bookstores to insert a gift certificate for 3 heads of fresh broccoli in all the cookbooks they sell. Or, a health club may offer a Mary Kay beauty consultant coupons to put in each product she sells. Or, a software publisher will put a demo CD in a computer system box.

**11. Put posters and flyers on the temporary walls outside a construction site.**

Or hire someone to paint an artistic mural that ties into your product or company.

**12. Look for these overlooked bargain advertising opportunities:**

- College & high school newspapers & yearbooks
- Classified services on the World Wide Web (sometimes free)
- Local entertainment and tourist magazines
- Bulletin boards at schools, laundromats, grocery stores, church, etc. (free)
- Community group and association newsletters
- Commercial online services classifieds on Compuserve (a few dollars) and America Online (free)
- Smaller, local newspapers
- Chamber of Commerce publications

**13. Use your car to advertise your business or sale.**

You can advertise your business wherever you park your car! Post banners on your car and park it in a conspicuous location, or put magnetic signs on your car doors. Also, you could print an ad for your business on a piece of cardboard large enough to act as your auto sunshade. Make the message simple, big and bold.

**14. Hand customers a second business card to give to a friend.**

On the back of one card, write that customer's name. Tell him that if the person he hands that card to does business with you, will give both of them 10% off their next/first purchase. You could stamp that discount offer on the back of your cards.

**15. Make your vanity plate or license plate frame reflect what you do.**

**16. Write messages on the sidewalk in front of your store.**

A lingerie store owner stenciled small messages onto the sidewalks of New York, with provocative sayings like, "From here it looks like you could use some new underwear."

**17. Ask non-profit organizations and clubs to advertise for your business in exchange for raising money for them.**

One way you could help a local non-profit organization raise money is to give them a cut of your business on a day they bring customers into your store. For example, you could donate 1/2 of all receipts from a day's sales to their cause. The club could then advertise to their members and to the community to get prospects into your store that day, which will increase their chances to get more money.

Another way you could partner with a club is you could allow them to sell their products or offer services on your premises. Their advertising would bring customers to your store. You would allow them to sell mistletoe, wrap presents, or wash cars.

A third way is to give the club gift certificates or auction items for a fund raising event. For example, when the Boy Scouts go door-to-door selling raffle tickets, they could add value to their sales by presenting your gift certificate to each prospect. Another instance is a local baker who, instead of giving money, gave the promoters of a local food festival 200 loaves of bread. He said they could keep whatever money they made from selling his bread. In return, his company gets exposure and he is able to write off extra inventory for the cost of goods.

**18. Print your company name, logo and slogan on your personal checks.**

**19. Get the customer's attention with creative in-store signs.**

- Here are some ideas:

- Signs on the floor
- Signs hanging from slow-turning ceiling fans
- Mannequins holding signs
- "Shelf talkers" - signage or different colors hanging on the edge of the shelf below your product so it stands out from the rest.
- Project shadows on walls
- Project video or slides on walls
- Print on walls with stencils
- Spray painted, graffiti-looking signs
- Highlight a sign with a reflective foil
- Direct lights on important signs
- Display a message on a floor computer
- Inflatable signs and balloons

**20. Ask your cable company to feature your company in their advertisements.**

Cable operators often advertise their programming or advertising opportunities between shows. If you already advertise on T.V., ask them to highlight your business in their promo spots.

**21. Obtain valuable advertising data from media kits and advertising salespeople.**

The media kits from newspapers and TV and radio stations can tell you a lot about your market demographics. You can also talk to an advertising salesperson to find out what ads have been working for your competitors.

**22. Print full color book covers for elementary and high school students.**

Make the design look "cool," but advertise your business at the same time. Give them to teachers and students on the first day of school.

**23. Here are some places you may find bulletin boards to post your flyers and signs for no cost:**

- In front of your own business
- In front of neighboring/partnering businesses
- Subway stations

- School offices
- Senior recreational facilities and retirement homes
- College dormitories (community area, hallways, bathrooms)
- Fraternities, Sororities
- Churches
- Other local community clubs and organizations
- Apartment buildings (laundry rooms)
- Community activity centers
- Grocery stores
- Shopping malls
- Car washes
- Laundromats
- Condominium complex party center
- Hotel and motel lobbies
- Utility poles
- Military cafeterias and recreation centers
- Counters of public places
- Meeting convention centers and rooms
- Construction walls
- Libraries
- Union halls
- Chamber of commerce
- Medical or professional office
- Roller rinks and bowling alleys
- Waiting room at auto repair and tire shops
- Liquor and convenience stores
- Company bulletin boards of friends and family
- Tourist information centers
- Highway rest stops
- Banks
- Factories

**24. How do you make your flyer stand out from a crowded bulletin board?**

- Here are some ideas:
- Have tear off tabs on the side of the flyer
- Use unique pictures and graphics
- Frame the edges of the flyer with a border
- Use spot color ink, or full color printing
- Make borders and graphics that look three dimensional



- Cut the paper into a different shape
- Print text, quotes, prices or testimonials inside sunbursts or balloon art
- Reverse printing (white type on black)
- Make the tear-off tabs into coupons
- Type special effects
- Glue a three dimensional object on the flyer
- Pin samples or coupons around the flyer
- Make it larger, perhaps 11X17 with big tear-offs
- Cut the flyer into a unique shape.
- Use reflective paper, or reflective lettering
- Tack it up with 30 colorful tacks
- Put up multiple flyers at multiple heights
- Make it a fold-out, like a greeting card with a window
- Glue a full-color picture onto the flyer
- Make the headline large and include the word "FREE"
- Keep it simple short, clear, benefits-oriented message
- To get a free brochure on bulletin board advertising call Thumbtack Bugle at 510-653-8063.

**25. Develop a slogan that lets people know where you are.**

Advertise the slogan on the radio, T.V. in your marketing communications and elsewhere. For example, a delivery truck might have a sign that says "Main Street Saw & Knife Shop...You get an edge at the top of the hill."

**26. Offer a free item just for responding to your advertisement.**

It could be an informational pamphlet, consultation, video tape, or advertising specialty.

**27. Use a vending machine as an advertising medium.**

Place a sign on a bubble gum dispenser with your company name and logo on it, along with a sign that says part of the proceeds will go toward a scholarship or charity. You could even put a business card holder on the machine that holds cards good for a discount at your store. Then, offer a local business owner who gets a lot of foot traffic 25% of the gross proceeds if he agrees to put the vending machine on his floor. 50% of the proceeds can go to the charity, 25% towards the business partner, and 25% to paying off your vending machine and candy. It ends up being a no-cost advertising medium that builds goodwill for your company.

**28. Are college students in your market? If so, here's some ways to reach them:**

- Tour the dorm halls and slip coupons underneath the doors or place them on door handles.
- Post flyers on bulletin boards around campus and the dorms.
- Tape flyers on the inside of bathroom stalls in the dorms.
- Partner with the local pizza parlor to put coupons with the pizzas they deliver.
- Advertise in the college newspaper and local coupon tabloid.
- Work with fraternity and sorority leadership to offer their members a special discount.
- Exhibit in the university union at the beginning of the semester or during the college's open house.
- Partner with the university bookstore to distribute coupons inside their books at the register counter. Offer student/faculty discounts.
- Sell your products through the university bookstore.
- Check with the student union for advertising opportunities. Some colleges prepare packets of information for the incoming freshman class that include flyers from local businesses.
- Do cooperative marketing with other businesses that attract students, such as copy shops, inexpensive restaurants (taquerias, sandwich shops), coffee houses, bars, night clubs, liquor stores, and video stores.
- Exhibit at the local flea market, where many students shop.

**29. Park your car or a truck on a freeway overpass with a banner hanging off the right side of the vehicle.**

Make sure it's big, bold and brief so that drivers will look up and have time to read your banner!

**30. Put out a fold-out sign, like real estate agents use for open houses, on the sidewalk or road in front of your business.**

You could also place them on street corners around your block to direct people to your business.

**31. Use a VCR and a rear-projection screen system in your front window at night to advertise your products, sales and hours at night.**

Create a slide presentation on a computer and transfer it to tape to play on the projector. You could even wire sound to outside speakers so people can hear your advertisements.

**32. If you ship products or offer remote service, advertise in the Yellow Pages of outside cities and counties.**

You can even advertise nationally in the Yellow Pages.

**33. Promote your sales with handwritten in-store price signs.**

This is a practice often used by supermarkets. They do this for products that are actually on sale as well as for products that they want to sell but are not necessarily lower priced. A handwritten sign creates the perception of a sale or special deal.

**34. Sponsor a highway.**

It usually costs nothing, just the time to do a quarterly trash pickup along that stretch of road. Your sponsorship gets your company name on a sign, which thousands of drivers will see.

# Chapter 2

## Customer Service & Satisfaction

### **35. Guarantee your product or service in unique terms**

...such as, the "90-day like-it-or-get-your-money-back-and-a-free-ice-cream-cone guarantee."

### **36. Remind the customer of your total satisfaction guarantee a number of times after they purchase.**

Inform them of your guarantee at the time of purchase. Then, include a reminder in your initial thank-you card. Then follow up later with a postcard that expresses your hopes that the product is satisfactory. While your guarantee may be implied or displayed on a sign, repeating your guarantee will remind them why there is less risk shopping with you. It also shows your confidence in your product, your business honesty, and it builds a relationship with your customer.

### **37. Make your bathroom a pleasurable experience.**

If your business allows customers to use your bathroom facilities, keep them clean, well stocked, and smelling great (buy an industrial air freshener). Think about feeding some music into the bathroom. You could put a rack in the bathroom stalls that holds the company newsletter, or put some jokes in big print on the inside of the stall doors. At a time when they are most open to think about the business they are doing, or about to do with you, provide your customers with a pleasurable experience.

*Give customers bathroom reading. At Chili's Restaurant, they post that day's newspaper on the walls in front of the urinals.*

### **38. Provide customers with things to read, watch or listen to while they are waiting in line.**

This will help reduce their waiting anxiety and put them in a better mood when they purchase. Auto repair shops and hair salons usually having a comfortable waiting area with car and hair magazines, respectively. Nordstrom's clothing store places chairs and couches throughout the store so spouses and children can relax while the other spouse or parent shops. One clothing store in Chicago puts couches, magazines and a large screen T.V. in the back of their store for weary shopping partners. Another example is Magic Mountain, a theme park in California, which installed televisions and water mist sprays in the lines to entertain and cool off the park guests as they wait to ride the roller coasters.

**39. Make customer feedback cards handy for customers to turn in or mail from home.**

Create a drop box near the front door of your business and make the cards business-reply postage paid in case they want to take the card with them.

**40. Put up YES signs.**

Instead of the standard signs behind the counters that say things like, "No Refund or Exchange," or "No checks accepted," put up signs that say "Yes, we do take checks. Yes, refunds are given within 90 days of purchase. Yes, your satisfaction is guaranteed."

**41. Find out how happy your customers are with you by impersonating a competitor.**

Michael LeBoeuf, in his book *How to Win Customers and Keep them for Life*, tells a story of a young boy who did just that. He entered a drugstore phone booth and the druggist overheard the following conversation: "Hello, is this the Smith residence?...I would like to apply for the opening you have for a gardener...What's that, you already have a gardener? ..Is he a good gardener?...Are you perfectly satisfied with all of his work?...Is he not doing anything that you would like to have done?...Do you plan on keeping him?...I see...Well, I'm glad you're getting such excellent service. Thanks anyway. Bye."

As he left the booth the druggist remarked, "Johnny, I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. I know it's none of my business, but aren't you the Smiths' gardener?" To which Johnny replied, "That's right. I just called to find out how I'm doing."

**42. Reward employees for great customer service, and empower employees report their co-workers good and bad performance.**

82% of all lost customers can be attributed to poor performance or bad attitude. Since business owners don't have the time to supervise every customer transaction, get employees to report customer complaints or observations about their co-workers.

Create an anonymous drop box, which only you, the manager, can open. Why would employees "rat" on their co-workers? Maybe they would if they participated in profit-sharing, or if their bonuses were based on the ratio of customer kudos to complaints.

For this to work you have to make sure you have a solid customer feedback program in place to measure the employee's performance. First, have your employees wear name tags so customers can identify them. Place business reply (postage paid) customer feedback cards and drop boxes throughout the store. Customers can either drop their comments in the box or mail it when they get home. Then, you can tie the responses into your employee reward program. For example, Jerry R. Wilson, in his book, Word-of-Mouth Marketing (John Wiley & Sons), tells the story of a grocery chain that has a "Catch our employees doing something extra" program. Comment cards are available throughout the store and each employee wears an oversized name tag allowing customers to see their names. The cards can be dropped in one of several boxes around the store, or mailed free. For each card returned, the employee named receives a gift certificate good for \$5.00 at any of several area restaurants.

**43. Take pictures of your best customers and put them on a wall in the employee room so everyone gets to know them by name.**

**44. Reward customers for doing business the most profitable way.**

You may want customers to shop at slow hours, pay in certain terms, or order via fax. By providing incentives, you can persuade customers to do business on these terms. For example, a bank advertised that every 25th car at the drive-up window would receive a coupon for a free car wash. The increased business through the drive-up window decreased the traffic inside the bank, freeing up employees to help customers inside and reducing the wait times.

**45. Educate your customers about your product or service before and after their purchase.**

Customer education can increase sales and post-purchase satisfaction. One way to do this is to put a rack near the cash register to hold pamphlets, brochures and flyers that provide helpful information to your customers. For example, if you sell batteries, you could have a pamphlet describing how to charge them properly. If you sell sporting goods, you could have a brochure on how to take care of sprained ankles and other

injuries. You could also include information on the proper care and use of your products. This information will set proper expectations, increase customer satisfaction and decrease returns.

For example, an owner of a garden and plant store has a satisfaction guarantee replacement policy that will guarantee any plant she sells. Since a plant's health, and the customer's satisfaction, lies in the customer's hands, she explains how to take care of the plant both orally and in writing to every customer.

#### **46. Place a host/hostess at the door.**

Have you ever walked into a Wal-Mart? There's usually a friendly employee there to welcome you to the store, pull out a shopping cart, and answer any questions you might have. There are several benefits for putting a host at the front door:

- A friendly smile and welcome will put customers in a good mood as they enter the store.
- The host can answer customers questions, direct them to sales items, or hand them an in-store promotional brochure.
- They act as a security guard.
- At the end of the day they can give you feedback on what kind of customers were coming through the door, what they were looking at in the window, and what type of questions they were asking.

#### **47. Create a short voice-message menu system to give customers information they need during off hours.**

For example, when a customer calls after hours, it could say, "Thank you for calling the Mason Pool Supplies. We'll be open promptly at 8:00 am to serve you. To leave a message of any length, press 1 now. For store location and directions, press 2. For an update on new products and current sales, press 3."

#### **48. Give your best customers priority access to support, information and access to your staff.**

You could provide them with a priority number for customer service, your personal office number, or a pager number. The increased communication with customers will help build their trust in you.

**49. Post your responses to customer feedback. Tell your customers if you make a change to your business or product based on their feedback.**

One way to do this is to post responses to your customers comments, complaints and suggestions. Reserve a wall for customer feedback cards (with the names erased or torn off) and your typed responses to them. This will accomplish two things: 1) It will show them you listen to their suggestions and complaints and how you act on them, and 2) It gives waiting customers something to read if they are waiting.

If you make a noticeable change in policy, product or service due to your customers' suggestions, tell them. Post a sign in the store that says, "Due to popular demand..." or, "You asked for it..." or, "Per your suggestions...", etc. Announce your changes in your newsletter, on your web page, and tell them verbally through your employees.

**50. During the holiday season, offer to gift wrap your products.**

You can also gift wrap your gift certificates in a box as a special service to your customers. They will appreciate the effort you have made to make the gift certificate a surprise for the recipient.



# Chapter 3

## Direct Marketing

**51. Provide your friends and your best customers with blank, postage-paid envelopes and copies of your brochures.**

Ask them to address the envelopes to their friends and to write a personal note on your brochure as a recommendation.

**52. Send official-looking invitations to your customers or prospects to announce a sale, grand opening, seminar or other event.**

Or, create tickets to give to customers that will let them in the door for a special sale. Now they will be more likely to remember the event, and because there is a higher perceived value, they will be more likely to attend your event.

**53. Send new customers a "welcome kit" consisting of your literature, testimonials, helpful articles, promotional item, business card, and a coupon for their next visit**

**54. Send your direct-mail piece in a telegram or rush-delivery type envelope.**

Or, send it registered mail so the recipient has to sign for it.

**55. Forego the postage machine and use real stamps for letters, direct mail, and bulk-rate mail.**

It may cost you the labor to apply the stamps, but postage won't cost more and it will get the recipient's attention. You can even get stamps for bulk-rate postage.

Jay Conrad Levinson, the guru of Guerilla Marketing, suggests even going further by placing multiple stamps on an envelope. For example, when sending a large envelope, use five different-looking 32¢ envelopes instead of one \$1.45 stamp.

**56. Put a dollar in your sales letter to get their attention.**

Use spray glue to attach it on the letter. Tie in the dollar with the content of the letter. You could write something like, "Your time is worth money...", or "Would you like to see more of these? I can help..."

**57. Mail your message in a unique "envelope", such as a...**

- Giant postcard
- Piece of wood
- Jewelry box
- CD case
- Brown paper bag
- Greeting card
- Piece of plastic
- Paint can

**58. Put something with weight in the envelope, such as an audio tape, a penny, magnetic business card, a piece of gum, etc.**

A car dealership consultant sent a brand new Hot Wheels™ car with his mailing to grab the attention of the sales manager. Profits from one customer covered the cost of the entire mailing.

Casady & Greene, a software company, sent out a mailer that had chocolate lips glued to a postcard. The fold-over postcard was enclosed in a bubble envelope. They also put a red, reflective sticker in the shape of lips on the envelope. The cost of the chocolate, the sticker and a little extra postage was worth the increased response.

**59. Include a brochure and business card when you send your invoices to customers.**

This will either get in the hands of the customer contact and encourage a repeat purchase, or it will be received by the accounting department who is an influencer in the company's purchases. And if your suppliers could be your customers, send them a brochure when you pay their invoices.

You could also give customers promotional information with their receipt after purchase. One upscale clothing retailer puts their customers' receipts in an envelope. It occurred to

me there's an opportunity to put more information about the company, its clothing quality, and upcoming sales in the same envelope.

**60. Offer an association to pay for their newsletter mailing in exchange for including your promotional materials in their publication.**

**61. Find companies who have similar, but non-competing products, and send a cooperative mailing to your combined mailing lists.**

For example, a Mercedes Dealer sent its customers an offer for a free health club membership. The health club sent its customers an extended test drive offer for the Mercedes dealer. You could also send letters promoting his business to your customers, and they'll do the same for you.

As the coordinator of such co-op mailings, you may not have to pay any mailing costs in the end.

**62. Use a P.S. in your sales letters.**

Handwrite the P.S., or circle parts of your literature that would be of special interest to a potential client. Handwrite notes in the margin. Highlight or underline important points in the letter.

Siegfried Vogele, professor of direct marketing in Munich, Germany, has done extensive eye tests on what people look at first in the mailing piece. First, they look for who is writing them, then they look at how the letter is addressed, and then their eye jumps to who signed the letter, and the next thing they read is the P.S.

Ted Nicholas, Author of *Direct Marketing Success Letter* (813-596-4966), says the 7 most used P.S. types in successful sales letters are those which:

- Motivate the prospect to action.
- Reinforce the offer.
- Emphasize or introduce a bonus.
- Introduce a surprise benefit.
- Emphasize price or terms of your offer.
- Emphasizing tax deductibility of purchase.
- Emphasize guarantee.

**63. Show customer appreciation by mailing a lottery ticket with your thank-you note.**

**64. Send a self-stamped and address postcard with your direct mail piece that simply has a few checkboxes for a reply and some blanks for the respondent to add their name.**

When it's easy for prospects to respond to your direct mail, more will be likely to do so.

Silvana Clark marketed her highly-trained dog this way. She sent out a promotion kit to TV Show producers with a stamped reply postcard. The producer simply had to check one of the following options and return the card.

\_\_\_ *Yes! I'm interested in having Sherman on my show. Please contact me.*

\_\_\_ *Well...I'm not sure if Sherman fits the show format. Please send me additional information.*

\_\_\_ *Sorry - Sherman is cute, but not suitable for our show.*

**65. Check your local newspaper for new business prospects.**

Newspapers list fictitious name statements, business ownership changes, obituaries, help wanted, etc. For new businesses or ownership changes, you could send the new owners a short note of congratulations and a gift certificate for your services.

**66. Include two business cards in all correspondence.**

The recipient may put them in two places for easy access. Or they may recommend you to someone by handing them the extra card.

**67. If your business makes house calls, such as a plumber or painter, send postcards to the neighbors of your customer letting them know what service you provided.**

For instance, a painter might send a card that says, "We just painted your neighbor's house at 123 Maple Street. Their paint job costs less than you think and is guaranteed for 10 years! If you like what you see, give us a call for a free estimate." Painters and carpenters also post signs in their customer's yard while they're working on the house.

## **68. Add "Lift Letters" to your direct mail campaign.**

A Lift Letter, as described by Ted Nicholas, Author of "Direct Marketing Success Letter," is a letter from a third party in addition to the sales letter from your company. He claims, "With strong lift letters, response increases of 20%, 50%, 100%, 200%, and more have been demonstrated time and time again on my mailings and those of my clients."

The lift letter must come from someone other than the signer of the main letter and reflect a completely different style and tone than the sales letter.

Mr. Nicholas suggests the most effective Lift letters are:

- *Testimonial (from a customer, celebrity, or recognized authority)*
- *Telegram*
- *News release*
- *Memo*
- *Mini-letter*

You may enclose the lift letter in a separate envelope, clip or staple it to the main letter, or fold and enclose it as an insert. You may also typeset it in a different font and print it on a different color paper.

## **69. Spray a scent on your letter that will help sell your product.**

For example, if you send a direct mail piece soliciting your cleaning service, you could spray the letter with a pine or lemon scent. If you sell cosmetics or beauty products, you could use perfume. If you are renting or selling a mountain cabin, you'd use pine scent.

## **70. Use a red ink stamp to imprint a message on your envelope that will increase the chances of getting the prospect to open it.**

## **71. Create a local or industry niche catalog to sell your products.**

Partner with other retailers or manufacturers to put non-competing products in the catalog. You could mail it to your combined mailing lists and get other names from a broker. Share the costs of design, printing, mailing and fulfillment setup. You end up with an inexpensive way to get your product in front of more people than you ever would by yourself.

## **72. Hand address your direct-mail envelopes.**

If you have bad handwriting (like me), hire a high school or college student who can address them neatly. In the crowded mailbox of today's consumer, a hand-addressed envelope looks very inviting.

# Chapter 4

## Trade Show, Fairs & Events

### **73. Before a trade show, advertise a special contest or other attraction to draw attendees to the show and to your booth.**

For example, you could advertise a special giveaway or a free seminar at your booth. You may be able to share the costs of the ad with the trade show management since your ad will bring attendees to their show.

Get a mailing list from the exposition management company, if possible, and send an invitation card or gift certificate they can redeem at your booth for a prize or gift.

Inc. Magazine (May, 1996) tells the story of Frank Candy, president of the American Speakers Bureau, who wrote personal notes to lure 200 prospects to the Orlando, Fla., company's booth. "The invitations, which looked like greeting cards, cost the \$494,000 company less than \$1 apiece. Thirty-seven prospects showed up, boosting show-generated sales by more than 300% over those from the previous year's show. It was by far the most effective tool I've found in 15 years and at hundreds of shows," says Candy."

### **74. Offer your product or service as a raffle item or door prize at a trade show.**

Even to trade shows where you can't exhibit, the show host is likely to accept door prizes for the attendees. It's another way to get your name broadcasted to the attendees and printed in the conference guide.

### **75. Set aside special nights for certain groups or prospects.**

Create a "Private Shopping Night," featuring entertainment, refreshments and prizes for a local club. Give the shopping nights themes and titles that would get the media's attention.

### **76. Exhibit your product or service at local fairs and flea markets.**

If you can't afford to exhibit, offer another company a commission to sell your product where they will be exhibiting. Or, join together with a company who has complementing products to share a booth space.

In addition to weekly flea-markets and large fairs, pay attention to your local newspaper for smaller fairs that churches, schools, clubs and other organizations host.

#### **77. Place your product in the booths of other vendors.**

If your product can be used cooperatively with another vendor's product, or can help them in their exhibit, seed your product to exhibitors in exchange for the exposure.

Visioneer, a company that manufactures desktop scanners, offered their PaperPort™ scanners for free to exhibitors at major computer trade shows. Some vendors would use them to scan in and capture cards or other paper-based information. Other vendors who created links to the PaperPort scanner demonstrate how the products worked together. Visioneer gained a lot of exposure as attendees would see PaperPort scanners being used by several exhibitors.

#### **78. At the end of a speech, announce a special, buy-now offer for the audience.**

In other words, ask for the order at the end of your presentation and have the products and facilities on hand so audience members can purchase on the spot.

#### **79. Come early and stay late for meetings, seminars, and classes.**

These are the best times to meet people and be involved in conversations. At a conference, there will always be people sitting in the chairs looking over their literature while they wait for the session to start. Take a look at the name tags of the people you are sitting near. Turn to them to make a comment or ask a question, eventually introducing yourself. Then, after the session, go up to the speaker where people usually gather to ask questions. As you wait to talk to the speaker, strike up a conversation with a peer who is also waiting. These people could be potential customers, influencers, suppliers, partners, or referral agents. Collect their business cards, make notes on the back, and follow up with them.

#### **80. Rent a pushcart at your local shopping mall.**



Instead of committing to a storefront in a mall, you can sometimes negotiate a short-term rental agreement to put up a booth in the middle of the mall floor. Sometimes you can exhibit just on the weekends, or during special promotional events that bring traffic into the mall.

**81. Invite your best customers to an event or meeting where you will be introducing your product to new prospects.**

Let your best customers show your new customers why they should purchase from you. You could create a special sale, grand opening, or event at a trade show. Structure it so that both prospective clients and satisfied customer attend. If it is a seminar, introduce your best clients to the audience. Let them tell a story of how they've used your product or service. Or you could interview them. If it is a dinner, seat them next to prospective customers to get them talking.

**82. Send a company representative or mascot to walk the halls and isles of the trade show to entice attendees to come to your booth.**

**83. Offer trade show attendees company-logo bag or shipping box to carry their literature.**

Attendees will advertise your company as they walk through the isles of the show.

*Every trade show has a number of vendors giving away tote bags to hold show literature. One of the most creative and useful literature "bags" I've seen wasn't a bag at all. It was a box developed by Marketing Techniques, Inc. (310-635-8200). You could drop your literature through the flap in the box, would protect it from getting folded or wrinkled. Then, at the end of the show or conference, you could ship the box home so you don't have to carry it on the plane.*

**84. Celebrate your business' birthday.**

Invite customers and the media for food, celebration, and a sale.

**85. Bring in suppliers as experts to teach special classes to your customers.**

For example, a grocery store might invite a produce grower to give short classes on how to determine which fruits are ripe.

**86. Videotape participants in local sport games (city league softball, little league, kids soccer, etc.) and announce to the players or parents you will be showing the tape at your restaurant or store.**

Or, offer fans a copy of the tape with a purchase from your store.

**87. At conferences and trade shows, position yourself where you will be seen and heard.**

See if you can strike up conversations with potential clients by looking at their name tags as you walk through the crowds. In meetings, ask controversial or thought-provoking questions that relate to your business. Curious customers may want to talk to you afterwards.

**88. In a meeting, trade show, conference or party,**

Before an event, set a goal for the number of people you want to meet. You can start conversations with remarks about the food, speakers, or conference sessions. After a few sentences are exchanged you can introduce yourself and ask what the other person does. Don't forget to hand this new acquaintance your business card and get theirs in return. Write comments on the back of the cards you receive as reminders of your conversations and for follow up.

Once you have pre-determined you are going to network at an event, it's much easier to introduce yourself to strangers. When I have practiced this strategy, I am amazed at the opportunities I discover. The people I talk to, even if they aren't a prospect for my business, refer me to potential customers. Or, I'll learn something new about my industry, clients, competition, or uncover opportunities for partnership.

**89. If you are speaking at someone else's event, write the opening remarks for the person who will introduce you as the next speaker.**

Often, it is only appropriate for the person introducing you to "brag" about your or your company. By providing the host with correct information, their introduction will give you more credibility. Put the most important information first, make it concise, and point out your relevant achievements for the audience at hand.

**90. Invite prospects to enjoy celebrity entertainment, comedy, or free training at your trade show booth.**

One billiard company sent cue-balls and hospitality suite invitations to prospective clients before a show. Potential customers would be treated to the usual beverages and hour d'ouerves, in addition to the entertainment and tips from a trick shot artist that would be using the company's cues.

**91. Give away t-shirts at your booth if the recipient agrees to put it on right then.**

Many attendees will put the shirt over their existing shirt and wear it around the show, advertising your company and product. Or you could require them to shout out your company or product name so other attendees can hear, and whoever is the loudest wins.

**92. At events, wear clothing or an accessory, such as a lapel pin, that shows the name of your organization.**

Or reproduce your organization's logo onto a sticker and apply it on your attendee badge. Sometimes, the event name tag is small or doesn't tell others what you do. For example, I could go to a Chamber of Commerce meeting or a small business conference and wear a badge that says, "Ask me about Clever Marketing Ideas."

**93. Hire someone to drive a billboard advertisement around the city blocks near the trade show.**

Since there are already billboards on taxis and buses in a city, you may consider displaying a large billboard on a trailer or truck to get people's attention. On the sign, advertise your products, your booth number, and something free attendees will receive for mentioning the sign.

**94. Create a contest where customers can compete with each other using your product.**

Offer local, regional and national contest prizes. For example, MacPlay® Software publicized a Descent™ contest where computer clubs across the nation would host game competition among their members. The contest helped spread word of the new game among computer enthusiasts. The national championship was then held at the Macworld Expo® trade show.

**95. For an event, party or grand opening you can "subpoena" guests to come.**

Nicholas E. Bade, in his book "Marketing Without Money!," offers this tip: "Make your invitation look like a real subpoena. Then write legal but humorous copy such as 'You are hereby ordered by the District Court of Good Times to appear at a party...' For even greater impact, dress up like a law officer and personally deliver your subpoenas. This approach has been used widely with excellent results."

# Chapter 5

## Giveaways

**96. Donate products or service as auction items or prizes for charities, raffles, auctions, sport teams, and fund-raisers.**

Giveaways like this are often tax write-offs, and they achieve goodwill for your company. You can even achieve publicity for your donations by announcing them through radio stations, the chamber of commerce, nonprofit associations, and clubs.

**97. Advertise a unique, seasonal giveaway for every person who shops with you during that period.**

For example, give away miniature Christmas trees during December. Or a big Hershey's Kiss™ for customers who spend over \$30 the week before Valentine's Day.

**98. In the beginning of Winter, on a freezing morning, visit homes early in the morning and place ice scrapers under the wipers of frosted car windshields.**

Attach a gift certificate and a note that says something like, "...so you can clearly see we are here to serve you."

**99. Offer free product or service to drivers who get a traffic or parking ticket.**

Announce to the press and your customers that you would like to help improve the day for people who receive a ticket. If a person brings in their speeding or parking ticket to your store within a week from receiving it, you will give them free product. You could even inform the local police and highway patrol of your offer so they can advertise your message to their ticket recipients.

**100. Offer your customers free samples that tie into a holiday.**

A Mary Kay representative wrapped small packages of cosmetics and skin care samples in tissue and hand-delivered them to ex- and non-purchasing customers the day before Valentine's Day. The samples matched the customers previous purchases and skin tones. Attached was a heart-shaped note that read, "I wish you and your husband a beautiful Valentine's day." The recipients appreciated the gesture and regained an interest in the product, turning them into purchasing customers again.

**101. Instead of giving a gift to your customer, give one to a charity in their name.**

The customer feels good for what his patronage has provided to charity, and it builds goodwill for your company.

**102. Give away a free gift with every purchase during Thanksgiving week.**

Don't advertise that you will be giving away the free gift. When customers ask, "What's this for?," you reply, "It's Thanksgiving. While we say thank-you every time you shop, it seems right at Thanksgiving to tell you thank you in a special way."

**103. Do something extra for your customer. Or, give something away to them that compliments their purchase.**

It adds value to your product, builds a relationship with the customer. For example, when Ethan Allen drivers deliver a dining room set, they go back to the truck to bring in a vase of roses. Larry's Shoes offers its customers foot massages while the salesperson searches for the right shoe size. Another instance is our local Straw Hat Pizza who lets the kids ride their motorized pony for free. Think of how many kids ask their parents to eat there again!

Or, give customers something extra just to say thank you. A shoe repair man includes a sample size tube of shoe polish with every major repair job. A plumber gives every customer a small bottle of liquid drain cleaner as part of house calls. An auto repair shop that cleans the car inside and out, including a complimentary wax job, before it's delivered to their customer.

**104. Donate to charities and organizations whose members and participants match your target market.**

Giving away product, service or money to non-profit organizations and worthwhile charities can build goodwill for your company and be a tax write-off to boot. But it won't go much further unless you target your donations as you target your advertising. Give away products to the charities, clubs and events where your target market will see your company name.

When you give something away, don't be afraid to ask for some exposure in return. Richard Alfaro, owner of Alfaro's Bakery in Watsonville, CA, was asked by a school to give them \$6,000, an increase from last year's donation. This year he asked them to put his logo in the gym or on booster materials. Since it costs relatively little for them to do this, they granted him the advertising exposure. However, they wouldn't have offered if he didn't ask.

**105. Instead of giving promotional items to the target customer, offer them to the customer's children, spouses or grandparents.**

A men's clothing retailer ran an ad just before Father's Day. The ad showed a small boy holding a box tied with a big bow. The headline said: "Let no father be without a present this Father's Day..." and the copy went on to say that any child coming into the store on a certain day, in the company of an adult would receive, free of charge, a fine hand-rolled linen handkerchief as a gift for Dad. On the specified day, the line of kids was blocks long. Later, when an executive in the store was asked how many handkerchiefs they had given away, the answer was: "That's not what matters. What's important is that we sold more furnishings that day than on any other day in our history, including any Christmas period."

**106. Give your product to purchase influencers and develop relationships with them.**

- Influencers are the people who are seen as credible and talk to others. They are the movers, shakers and opinion leaders in your industry or community. They include:
- Industry pundits
- The press (editors, journalists, freelance writers)
- Officers (and immediate past leaders) in industry or local or associations and clubs.
- Trainers and speakers to your industry or community (Pastors, Teachers, Leaders)
- Retail salespeople who sell your product
- Industry analysts and forecasters
- Celebrities, athletes
- Your partners, employees, family, friends
- People who converse and give advice for a living (Attorneys, Counselors, Therapists)
- Bankers, financial planners, venture capitalists involved in your industry or business.

- Meeting planners
- Salespeople of non-competitors or partnering companies who talk to your prospects
- Other direct salespeople, brokers or agents who could foreseeably converse to their customers about your business
- Suppliers
- Those honored for awards
- Team leaders
- Jay Conrad Levinson, author of the Guerrilla Marketing series, tells the story of Tuxedo Junction, the largest supplier of tuxedos in the Buffalo area. They built their rental business around the lucrative high school prom season, and have created a clever affinity program to ingratiate themselves to the senior class. Every year, the captain of the football team and the date of the head of the cheerleading squad are given a free tuxedo rental from Tuxedo Junction. As you might imagine, this endorsement makes it far easier for them to spread the word to the rest of the student body.

#### **107. Cross-sell your customers by providing samples of products they didn't buy.**

When a customer buys one product, include a sample of another item, or a gift certificate for a different service, with their purchase. For example, a deli may put out samples of chips at the register while people are paying for their sandwich. Or a computer shop may give a repair customer a gift certificate for one free computer training course.



# Chapter 6

## Internet & Online Marketing

**108. Create a link on your web page that enables prospects to download information, a free catalog, interesting ideas, etc. to their hard drive.**

Tie in the valuable download with information and a special offer on your product or service.

**109. Send your customers and prospects electronic holiday cards.**

It can just be text or you can incorporate some ASCII art to make it creative.

**110. Participate in online chats.**

You can participate or be featured as a guest in chats on America Online, Compuserve, and the Internet. Try to get involved in discussions where you can lend your advice and expertise to the audience.

**111. Create a contest with your customers that involves visiting your web site to see if they have won a contest, to get clues to a riddle, or to print out pieces to a puzzle.**

**112. Offer something new and display the "last updated" date on the home page.**

The only reason customers would come back to your page is if there is a reason for them to. By announcing an upcoming newsletter, new products, a periodic coupon, or some new information every week or month you can entice prospects and customers to come back to your web site. It may be enough for them to add your web site to their bookmark list.

**113. Put your company name, phone number, web page URL and e-mail address on everything you distribute.**

If they lose your business card or letter, they may save some other piece of literature that is easily accessible. Having this information on every piece of literature makes it easier for your customers and prospects to contact you.

**114. Encourage prospects to contact you by posting an offer for free information on newsgroups, listservs, and discussion boards.**

I once found a free list of e-mail addresses for high-tech media and journalists which was posted on America Online. Since our company was in the high tech public relation business, I knew the people interested in this information would also be our prospects. I posted a short list of the media contacts to a listserv of software marketers. I also offered the rest of the list to anyone who e-mailed me a request. Within a couple days I had over 50 high tech marketers sending me a request, to which I simply pasted the response which included the rest of the list, a brief description about our company, and an offer for 10% off our co-op mailing service.

**115. Remind users who visit your web site to add it to their bookmark list.**

Sometimes "web surfers" get online without any purpose. It is during these times they visit the sites listed in their bookmarks. Give them a reason to come back with new content, and remind them to add your site to their bookmark list. You will have a good chance of being added to their Web browsing menu of choice.

**116. Participate in Internet Newsgroups and e-mail list discussions on topics of local interest or those that are related to your business.**

You can have friends evangelize your business by answering people's questions on these online discussion boards. And instead of advertising your business, ask questions on a newsgroup that lead to a discussion about your business. Include your signature (your name and company on the bottom) on every newsgroup posting and e-mail. (Note: it's bad "netiquette" to blatantly advertise on newsgroups.)

**117. Provide content for other web sites.**

Webmasters and business owners are always looking for valuable content to provide their viewers. Write an article of tips based on your expertise and offer it to webmasters

of like-minded sites. In return, ask for a link from your web page to theirs, and promise to reciprocate that link.

**118.Keep pre-created marketing copy in your computer scrapbook or as a text file that you can easily cut and paste into e-mails.**

It makes it quick and easy to respond back with e-mail requests for information. You could simply customize responses with the recipient's name at the beginning and a p.s. at the end of the e-mail.

**119.Offer fun, interactivity, information and/or utility at your web site.**

For example, you could provide:

- Jokes, comics, and humor that changes weekly
- Shareware files to download that are related to your industry
- Quotes or tips of the week
- A graffiti board, where visitors can make comments
- Reviews of web pages related to your industry
- Free reports of information
- Discussion board
- Time-lapsed pictures of the street in front of your store (Involves connecting a \$99 Connectix QuickCam digital camera to your computer and installing free software, such as WebCam, which will take a picture every 30 seconds and automatically updates them to your web page)
- Puzzles, quizzes, online games
- Audio clips
- Listing of cool sites
- ASCII art related to your customer's industry
- The latest news related to your industry or your customer's industry
- Contests, surveys, polls (and the results)
- Animation and interactivity using Macromedia® Shockwave™ (<http://www.macromedia.com>)
- Applets and animation created with Java Script® by Sun Microsystems (<http://www.sun.com>, You can create little online programs that run on your server but can be used by visitors).

**120.Visit web pages of companies or organizations related to your business and send an e-mail to the webmasters requesting to reciprocate links.**

Keep a database of these webmasters to send e-mails when there is information or updates on your web page that they may want to highlight for their Web site viewers.

**121. Create a business card that tells customers you are online, especially if your business is not computer-related.**

It will intrigue internet-using customers to go home and check your web page out.

For example, I often frequent a local taqueria that serves quick and inexpensive Mexican food. I noticed a business card at the register that said, "We're online!" It listed the web page, along with the taqueria's phone number for call-in orders. I took the card home, accessed the page, and found the complete menu, ingredients, and a coupon that I could print out for a free taco from the web page.

**122. Send a company newsletter via e-mail.**

**123. Capture the e-mail addresses of your customers.**

Add a field to your customer database, order form, and telemarketing script. Let customers know their e-mail address will not be sold or distributed, and only used by you to communicate with them on occasion.

# Chapter 7

## Management & Operations

### **124. Make your packaging useful or reusable.**

For example, empty chubs baby-wipe containers can be used as Lego-like toys. Amurof Confections Company of Naperville, IL, sells a plastic jar filled with Candy tarts called Bug City. The lid of the jar is perforated so kids can use the jar to keep bugs in. Also, you should consider using recyclable packaging materials. Let your customers know by printing the recycled logo on the materials.

### **125. Look to your employees for referral sources.**

Give them cards that entitle their friends and family to a special deal (below any coupon discount). The cards can have a signature line for the employees to sign for authorization will feed their ego and get them more enthusiastic about giving the cards out. It will also allow you to track the distribution results so you can run contests for your employees.

### **126. Put pictures of your customers on the walls of your business to show your appreciation.**

Stew Leonard's store in Connecticut said that anyone sending in a picture of themselves with a Stew Leonard grocery sack would get their photo put up on the store wall. Over 20,000 people have submitted their pictures.

*McClintock's in Pismo Beach, CA, takes a Polaroid picture of customers who celebrate their birthday at their restaurant. On the way out, customers pin up their picture on the wall. They can also post their business cards there.*

### **127. Allow customers to get involved in your service.**

By involving customers in the process you build their trust and make your service a memorable experience for them. You can also save cost and give your customers a better value. Self-service options are becoming more popular in business today.

David and Kathryn Nugent increased Wednesday night business and media coverage of their Calda! Calda! Italian restaurant in Walnut Creek, CA by allowing customers to toss their own pizza. They now host a weekly Amateur Night for aspiring pizza chefs.

### **128. Find out who your purchasing and non-purchasing customers are.**

There are several ways to do this. It is the easiest to collect data about your purchasing customers. If you collect the name and address of your customers when they purchase, you can cross reference their zip codes with census data from the government or R.L. Polk Company. You can also capture this information from your customers' checks, searching for addresses through a phone book CD (like SelectPhone from ProCD), in-store questionnaires, and telephone interviews.

Another way is you could also have an employee write down license plate numbers in your parking lot. Some states allow you to purchase names and addresses of car owners by submitting their plate numbers. You can use this information to research customers patronizing your store or your neighbors' stores. You could also do mailings to them.

A third way is to have someone periodically jot down the makeup of the people inside and outside your store. What's the number of people in your store during a certain hour? Cross reference that with the number who purchased from you. How many people walk by your store without looking at the window? What is the sex, age, and dress of people coming in your store and walking by? How many people come in with their friend, husband, wife, or entire family? This information is useful in creating in-store promotions and determining the products and customer service you should be offering existing and potential customers. You might discover a different type of customer is shopping with you that you didn't consider your target market.

### **129. Give employees breath mints or breath spray (not gum).**

Bad breath is often overlooked by employees who work closely with customers, but it's not overlooked by the customer. A breath mint or spray is best because it is quieter than lip-smacking gum.

### **130. Dress up your product to catch the customer's attention make the usual look unusual.**

I once saw a package of ground beef that was decorated with edible ornaments to make the meat look like a smiley face. The out of the ordinary creation might have been enough to make a consumer stop in the meat aisle and think about having hamburgers that night.

**131. Use indoor and outdoor lighting to draw attention to your store.**

Customers tend to buy more when an establishment is well lighted. You can aim the direct lighting on the products or signs you want to get the most attention. You can even light up the outside of your business to make it appealing.

Turn recessed or ceiling-mounted track-lighting towards the outside window, aimed at the ground. In the absence of bright window signs or neon lights, this is a way to attract attention to your store at night. It will create attention-grabbing bright spots in your window and illuminate the ground around your store. You could also make your company sign and building stand out at night, light up the outside walls with ground lighting.

**132. Broadcast uplifting music in your store to put your customers a good (purchasing) mood.**

**133. Post thank-you letters, articles, and community support awards on the walls of your business.**

Customers who come to your office can read them. They can also build the morale of your employees. One company had enough letters to use them as wall paper.

**134. Include a registration card with your product to capture the name, address and other information about your customers.**

Offer a promotional item if they register their product.

**135. Create an advisory committee of your best customers for your business.**

Host them to a semiannual meeting and dinner to discuss business practices, pricing, customer service, future products or services, etc.

**136.Let your accountant know the effectiveness of each marketing program.**

This will help gain their support for future marketing expenditure decisions.

**137.Whenever you travel, shop a comparable business.**

What are they doing that you can copy or build on? How can you differentiate yourself?

**138.Offer employees a reward for bringing in new customers.**

For example, a restaurant in Denver gave their employees a dollar for every new friend, family member, college classmate, or softball teammate they brought in for a meal. Have contests to see who can bring in the most new guests.

**139.Sell t-shirts, hats, sweatshirts, and other merchandise with your company logo on them.**

Have your employees wear them and remind customers they are available to purchase. Customers who buy them will be your walking advertisements and remind themselves of your business. For these reasons, you might consider selling them at cost or just above. Offer rewards and contests for employees who sell the most company-logo merchandise.

**140.Look to college interns for help in marketing and promoting your business.**

141.Not only can they come up with creative ideas, they can also implement your strategies inexpensively or for free!

**142.Sometimes a new name can mean new business.**

Think about changing the name of your business or products to something that is unique, memorable, and conveys a felt need.

**143.Combine your product or service with another to create a package that has more value.**



For example, a dog kennel that bathes your dog and delivers him to your home when you return from vacation combines service and convenience. Or combine several products to be sold as a gift basket.

**144. Show value to your customers by listing on the invoice all the items or services they purchased.**

For example, a computer manufacturer I bought my computer from listed the hard drive, RAM, video card, sound card, CD-ROM drive, modem and processor on the invoice. Even though these items were included as a package for the one price I paid, they stacked up the value by reminding me of all the options that were included in the package price.

**145. Use wasted time at home (such as during T.V. commercials) to perform tedious marketing duties, such as...**

- Stamping envelopes
- Hand-addressing envelopes
- Reviewing competitor's literature
- Signing form letters
- Framing customer testimonials
- Highlighting important copy in your literature
- Handwriting a P.S. in your form letters
- Writing or reviewing your to do list

**146. Pass out marketing suggestion cards to your employees.**

It can be specific to a problem, such as coming up with a new slogan, or solicit their general opinions and ideas about the marketing programs. A lot of your employees will have great ideas. Offer a bonus if you use their idea.

**147. Invest in your competition to research them.**

In his book, How to Drive Your Competition Crazy, Guy Kawasaki reminds you, "If your competitor is publicly traded, one of the easiest ways to get information about it is to buy a share of its stock. This entitles you to receive shareholder information about the company such as quarterly and annual reports."

#### **148. Use competitors who have gone out-of-business as a marketing channel.**

While their store is empty and the landlord is looking for a new leaseholder, you may be able to put your products in the window that directs your competitor's customers to your store. Also, when competitors go out of business, and their phone number is disconnected, ask them if you can forward their phone calls to your store. Or, request that the operator's "no longer in service" message directs callers to your phone number.

Inc. Magazine (February issue, 1996) tells the story of how a bike shop worked with the telephone company to direct its competitor's customer to his shop. "Zane's Cycles, in New Haven, CT, offered to pay the local yellow pages a small fraction of the defunct dealer's remaining advertising costs. Zane arranged to have their out-of-service phone numbers ring at his shop. The total cost to him is about \$200 a month, which he'll continue to pay until a new book is published. Because the yellow pages helped him track the transferred calls, Zane knows he received 260 inquiries from his former competitors' customers in one month."

#### **149. Get a toll-free 800 number.**

It might seem silly if your customers are local, however, a toll-free number gives the impression your company is larger. Also, your customers can call you free from any pay phone and you will be able to expand nationally in the future. A toll-free line doesn't cost a lot either. Terri Lonier, author of Working Solo, discovered that AT&T offers a "Starter Line" service for 800 numbers for \$6/month, plus \$.31/minute for calls. If you'll be using your 800# for short calls, such as primarily taking orders, it may be worth the investment, since customers will be more willing to call.

#### **150. Offer free refreshments and snacks to your customers.**

It will build goodwill for your company and can differentiate you from your competitors. For example, like many banks, you could put out coffee and donuts for your morning customers. You can even use your refreshments in your marketing as an incentive to bring new customers in.

#### **151. Get creative with financing and payment terms to make a sale.**

Look for alternatives to a customer who objects about price or payment terms:

- Take personal checks and postdated checks. You could sign up with a check guarantee service to cover bounced checks. It usually costs about 2% of the amount of each check about the same as credit card merchant fees.
- Accept as many credit cards as you can Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express.
- Offer low percentage rate financing.
- Allow customers to pay with a PO# so you can invoice them.
- Provide extended payment terms or a lay away plan.

**152.Motivate employees to sell by offering unique rewards.**

One restaurant owner wanted his servers to push banana cream pies. So the manager ran a contest. The server who sold the most banana cream pies would win their own pie and get to throw it in the manager's face! Needless to say, this reward motivated the employees more than just taking a pie home.

**153.Check with suppliers for discounted or your free promotional materials, signs, and displays.**

For instance, a manufacturer may buy neon lights in bulk that promote their product. Buying from them, you can put neon in your window for less than you could buy it yourself. They may also offer other free promotional signage that is available just by asking.

**154.Use the expertise and talents of your employees to entertain or give special service to customers.**

Can an employee do card tricks, play an instrument, sing, or tie balloon animals? Could one of your employees provide a unique or valuable service to your customers in your store? For example, the employee of a home office furniture store has CAD computer experience. He helps customers design and draft their home office setup.

**155.Give every employee his or her own business cards.**

They will be inclined to give them out to friends, families and other prospects. You can even utilize the back of the card as a discount coupon.

*Every sales associate at Nordstrom carries their own business cards to give to customers. It helps establish a personal relationship between the employee and the customer.*



# Chapter 8

## Marketing Communications

### **156. Create a pamphlet of useful, free information related to your expertise.**

Place your company logo and phone number on the front and back of the pamphlet. Also, briefly describe the benefits you offer potential customers and how they can contact you. Distribute your pamphlets at stores, conferences, community areas, and anywhere else your target customers will be. Place them in waiting rooms; places like doctors, dentists, quick-lubes, auto repair shops, beauty salon, clinics, etc. Buy an acrylic display case to hold the pamphlets that says, "FREE, Take One!"

### **157. Use the back side of your business card.**

Print your services or products, a discount coupon, or an incentive for them to hand it to a friend.

*Here, Batteries Plus uses the back side of their business card to offer the new customer, or the prospect referred to by an existing customer, with a number of benefits.*

### **158. Achieve a two-color look in small printing quantities by printing reversed type on white paper and coloring in the letters with colored highlighters.**

While it may take time to highlight the text for several flyers, it costs less than printing multiple colors. You could also use this technique on letters, signs and gift certificates.

### **159. When a client raves about what a great job you've done for her, ask her to put it in a letter.**

You could even offer to draft the letter for them! Include excerpts from her letter in your media kits, brochure and other literature.

### **160. If your company name doesn't fully explain the benefits you offer customers, write a brief description of your business under your company name or logo.**

**161. List your products or services on the side or bottom of your fax cover sheet.**

**162. Target different market niches by slightly modifying your marketing communications.**

McDonald's has different commercials for the Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian audience. McDonald's also has commercials featuring seniors, kids, mothers, and teenagers. Why? Because they can target these niches based on the shows they advertise on.

You can modify your brochures, advertisements, direct mail, radio and other marketing communications to tailor fit the audience who you are targeting. Your copy, pictures, and overall message should fit the market who receives it. For example, let's say you are a clothing manufacturer whose target market is teenage girls. Within that audience you can target different geographic, socioeconomic, psychographic, and demographic markets. So, the in-store promotional posters you send to your retailer in San Diego, CA with a large Hispanic customer base should picture different models than the posters sent to a store in Oklahoma.

If necessary, translate your signs and message into the appropriate language. Pay attention to cultural values and the translation of your message for that group.

**163. Create contests where college students or classes can work on your logo, artwork, and other marketing communications.**

When I was helping start a sign-making company, I needed to create a logo. I went to the college and talked to the art and graphic design professors. I handed them flyers to give to their students which described a logo design contest. It described the concept of the business and the specifications for a logo. The winner of the contest would receive \$100 and the opportunity to put all the marketing communications created with their logo in their portfolio. In addition, many of the professors agreed to give non-winning students credit for their work. After receiving five entries the business owners and I decided on a winner. The winning student even helped in working with the printer to create the stationary, letterhead and business cards.

Another example is from a promotions class I took when I was in college. The class was divided up into groups. Each group worked for a local company to promote their business or work on a promotional project. Our group was in competition with another group to create a promotional media kit and brochure for a local construction company. At the end of the project, both groups presented their work to the client in class, and the client chose the winner. It was a win-win-win situation: The business got two groups of

four college students working on a promotional project for them. The students got to work on a project that would be used in the real world. And the professor created a curriculum around helping the local community.

**164. Create an informative newsletter and send it to your customers on an ongoing, regular basis.**

*For example, Erik's Deli and Cafe in California publishes a quarterly newsletter that tells customers the charities they are involved with, exciting events, management changes, contests, interview with the President, and franchising plans.*

**165. Save the direct mail pieces you receive to capture ideas for copy and design.**

**166. Give customers an informational piece that explains how to use your business.**

A new customer might not know understand how your business works and all you have to offer. They might not realize you could take orders by phone, perform free deliveries, accept all forms of payment, and take competitor's coupons. They may be curious about your satisfaction guarantee and return policy. And when they are thinking about a visiting your store, it would be helpful for them to have information about your hours of operation, a map and directions to your location, and contact information (phone, fax, e-mail, web page, pager, etc.). You could also include information about neighboring businesses or non-competing, related businesses that you trust and perhaps these businesses would do the same for you.

**167. Highlight product differences.**

If your products require an involved decision-making process, and there are many of the same products to choose from, communicate to your customer what the differences are. If you carry a line of similar products, how does each one differ from the other? How do your products differ from your competitors'? You could highlight these differences in a comparison chart or a short list of "in addition" features for each level of product.

For example, let's say I'm shopping for a BBQ grill. I find two grills where the picture looks the same, and there's a list of features on each box; however one is priced \$50 more than the other. Instead of comparing the two long lists of features in search of the difference, it would be helpful to have in store signage or a brochure that highlights the differences between the two; such as the more expensive model had 6 inches of additional grill space, more heating power (specific), and a cover.

**168.If appropriate, design your business cards to look like something from your business.**

You could change the design or cut your cards into a shape that relates to your business. A magician devised his card to look like the Jack of Hearts from a deck of playing cards complete with his name and phone number, of course. An architect may cut their card to look like a 30-60-90 degree triangle drawing tool.

**169.Create a business resume for new clients.**

If you're in business for yourself, it might be your personal resume. If you have a company with employees, you might create a company resume that highlights your clients, testimonials, years of experience, employees, and so on. If your experience, performance history, and company facts can sell for you, putting them in a resume is a much more credible piece than a brochure. This will help build the trust of your customers by showing your competence.

**170.You can Print three colors for the price of two, plus \$35.**

On one side of your brochure or direct mail piece you print in black and a PMS color. When they print the backside, request they replace that PMS color for another one. It will only cost you about \$35 for them to change the ink.

**171.Put something on the back of your business card that customers would want to keep.**

For example, you could print jokes, a funny picture, a coupon, or useful information appropriate to your business.

**172.Present the benefits for your products in a creative way.**

A prudent marketer will present the benefits of their product or service to their customer. Here are some ways to highlight those benefits in your ads and marketing communications:

- Case history
- Testimonial



- Competitor comparison
- Questions/objections and answers
- Qualifications or capabilities
- Features and benefits column
- Picture that SHOWS the benefits or product in use

**173.If you write an article in a magazine, or one is written about your company, order full-color reprints to use in your marketing.**

Magazine publishers usually charge you for printing them, but if they were going to pay you for your article, perhaps you could negotiate for free reprints.

**174.Print your company name and phone number on the products you sell.**

This suggestion may seem obvious if you are a manufacturer, but if you resell products you will want to remind customers where they bought their product.

An example of the benefits of this practice for a manufacturer is a shoe company that prints their toll-free number on the bottom of all its children's shoes. The manufacturer would get calls from curious kids or parents and was able to compile a database of their customers from these calls.

As resellers, Mary Kay consultants take the cosmetic products out of the boxes before they sell them to place small stickers with their name and number on the bottom of each product. When a customer runs low, they have the number right there to reorder.

**175.In your store decor, marketing communications, and dress, use the right colors to stimulate your target audience.**

Here are the favorite colors of different market groups:

- **Older people** prefer blue because it is easier for them to see.
- **Men** prefer deep shades of color.
- **Women** prefer more delicate tints.
- **Children** love bright yellows and reds.
- **Athletes** like brighter, purer colors.
- **Intellectuals**, with a thinking orientation, tend to like softer colors more.
- **Extroverts** prefer brighter, warmer colors.
- **Introverts** prefer cooler colors.

- **Lower income** people like bright, undiluted, pure colors.
- **Upscale**, higher income people want more subtle shades and tints.

## Chapter 9

### Promotions

**176. Create an event in front of your store to increase foot traffic and attract people to your store.**

Here are some examples of traffic-increasing events:

- Invite the Humane Society to bring in kittens and puppies for adoption to your store.
- Have a high school club run a car wash in your parking lot.
- Offer free or inexpensive tethered balloon rides in front of your store.
- Donate a gift to the local high school drill team in exchange for their agreeing to rehearse in front of the store during the weekday rush hour or on Saturdays.
- The company increased foot traffic into their store and got the media's attention.
- Rent a robot and run it remotely in front of your store.

**177. Offer a discount or free item when a customer brings in any of your competitors' yellow-page advertisement.**

**178. Bring in the president of a supplier, or a number of them, and run a "Presidents Day" promotion.**

They can sell your customers to buy their products from you.

**179. Become the "official supplier" of a group, team, club, or event.**

For example, if you're a shoe store, you could offer the local high school basketball team 25% off their shoes. Ask the coach for permission to advertise yourself as the "Official

Supplier" of the high school team. You could do the same for churches, associations, local clubs, or events to build goodwill and word-of-mouth advertising.

**180.Include a free bonus or a premium with your product.**

Customers often buy a product because they receive a bonus with their purchase. Take, for example, the Cracker Jack box with the toy prize, or the Bazooka bubble gum with the comic strip inside the wrapper. You can also tie it into a "buy now" message where the customer will only get the free bonus if they purchase immediately.

When Mary Kay consultants hold skin care classes, they will often offer a free lipstick or eye shadow if the attendees buy the skin care system that night. This gives the women an excuse to buy it right then instead of waiting.

**181.Send gift certificates to local heroes, high school sports achievers, or outstanding community achievers who are profiled in the paper.**

These people will talk to others about the rewards they received for their achievement. And gift certificate recipients rarely shop alone.

**182.Celebrate popular and unpopular holidays with a sale, entertainment or other attraction.**

Your competitors may hold Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter sales, but they may not do anything special for Labor Day, Arbor Day, St. Patrick's Day, or Earth Day. Leverage these low profile holidays to get attention, publicity, and a laugh from your customers.

**183.Host skill and guessing contests in your store.**

Announce a contest in which customers can win a prize for competing against each other or making the right guess. The most common of these is guessing how many jelly beans, pennies or whatever is in a jar. You could also create competitions games where customers can play each other in ping pong, video games, arm wrestling, eating, or something else that would be of interest to your target market. For example, a restaurant might have an eating contest. A sporting good store might host the ping pong tournament. The contests would bring participants and their friends and family into your store. You can also build mailing lists from participants' entries. The only costs to you are promotion of the contest and the prize.

#### **184. Attract parents to your store by offering something for kids**

A good example is Pizza Hut's successful "Book-It" program where they offer school kids who read four books a month a free personal pan pizza coupon, redeemable with an adult purchase. Another example is a florist that reserved room in the back for kids coloring books and toys.

#### **185. Have employees wear buttons or ribbons to promote a product or sale.**

#### **186. Seize the opportunity to tie in your promotion to a popular fad, era or public consciousness.**

Here are some examples of how smaller companies have capitalized from recent national events, trends, movies, stories, and themes by creating products, promotions and advertisements centered around them:

- **Jurassic Park:** A publisher creates a series of dinosaur coloring books.
- **AIDS:** A local clothing retailer donates 50% of its profits that month to the local AIDS relief foundation.
- **1996 Presidential election:** A bonanza for cartoonists, writers, entertainers, publishers, magazines, and other media.
- **Home office & telecommuting:** A local furniture store creates a new store tailored specifically to home office workers.
- **Friends (*the NBC television show*):** In 1995 and early 1996 it seemed every young woman asked their hair dresser for a new hair cut. Clothing retailers profited by carrying similar clothes.

#### **187. Run special promotions and sales just for your best customers.**

Let them know that it is a one time sale for special customers, which has only been advertised to a select few.

#### **188. Develop a frequent buyers program, similar to the frequent flyers program offered by airlines.**

Create a value card where you punch a number in the card every time your customer buys. After a customer makes 10 purchases, they get one free. You could also use receipts. Our local video store offers a free movie when we bring in 12 receipts from previous movie rentals.

*Boston Market, where I often eat lunch, only requires me to purchase 6 sandwiches before I get one free.*

*Sports City Cafe offers a membership to the MVP club where I would earn points every time I eat there. I am mailed a monthly statement of my accumulated points, which I can redeem for meals at the cafe or for sporting event tickets, apparel, vacations and other gifts.*

### **189.Create special sales around themes.**

Edgar Falk's book, 1,001 Ideas to Create Retail Excitement (Prentice Hall, NY) is a great resource for retailer promotions and sales ideas. He describes 180 themes throughout his book. Here are just a few:

- Back To School Savings
- Christmas in August Sales
- Cold Weather Bargains
- End Of Summer Specials
- Everything Out Of The Store
- If Your Name Is...Sale
- March Markdown
- One Cent Sale
- Rainy Day Sale
- Temperature Of The Day Sale
- The Truckload Sale
- Weekly Senior Citizen Sale
- Your Birthday Sale

### **190.When it's busy, use your in-store public address system to announce the best deal in the store.**

### **191.Leverage the promotion and advertising of neighboring businesses to bring customers into your store.**

When a business neighbor puts out balloons and streamers in front of their store, or puts a big "SALE" sign up, or takes out a full-page ad in the newspaper about their sale, there will likely be an increase in the number of customers passing by **your** store. Take this opportunity to capture these customers with your own balloons, streamers and signs.

Seth Godin and Jay Conrad Levinson, in their book, Guerilla Marketing Handbook, tell a story that exemplifies this strategy: "Three adjacent furniture stores compete for traffic in a Cleveland strip mall. The store on the south end put up a huge sign: CLEARANCE

SALE: EVERYTHING MUST GO. The store on the north end put up an even bigger sign that read, GREAT SAVINGS, 50% OFF. The guerilla in the middle hung up a small banner over his door that said only, MAIN ENTRANCE."

### **192. Turn third-party ticket stubs into coupons for your store.**

For example, partner with a movie theater to offer its patrons a discount on a dinner at your restaurant after the show. Their ticket stubs can serve as the discount coupon.

Also, many local clubs and associations will give out raffle tickets for door prizes at the end. Announce to those who didn't win a prize that their raffle ticket is good for a 20% discount at your store. Partner with schools, clubs, bands, businesses, and other organizations that host special events and give out tickets.

### **193. Increase the visibility of your store during a sale by using:**

- Mini-blimps & balloons
- Helium balloons tethered to a rope
- Banners
- Streamers
- Mascots
- Lights
- Cars with signs on them
- Mannequins placed outside or on the roof