



Marketing Methods and Tips

As a small business owner, it is your responsibility to gain new customers as well as win back those customers that you may have lost and also develop existing ones.

YOU are personally responsible for ensuring that your message reaches the clients that you wish to attract. Do not rely solely on Business cards and leaflets sent out at random to deliver the desired results.

Every marketing plan will be different dependant on the type of business, however, one thing is constant you need one!

It is an understatement that marketing can be costly and as such you need to define your market before embarking on your marketing plan.

You cannot sell something to someone that does not need it, or indeed want it. You must match your product or services with people that are most likely to purchase what you have to offer.

Things to consider include:

Are there gaps you can exploit in your chosen market place?

Are these gaps large enough to make a profit?

Can you achieve break even?

Is the market already flooded, or is there room for a new player?

Have you identified your competitor's strengths and weaknesses, and if so can you exploit their weaknesses?

Have you something unique or highly valued that can gain you entry into this market place?

Know your market

Elsewhere we have covered the need for research, however it is worth pointing out that in order to prepare marketing plan we need to know some key details:

Who your potential customers are, and where they are situated

Precisely what they want, and can you fill this need

What will motivate them to switch allegiance to you, and more importantly purchase

Know your customer

What order method do your potential customers currently employ?

What is your customer demographic profile in terms of age, ethnicity, and gender and so on?

Who will make the buying decision and are there any key influencers that may impact on any purchase (eg secretary, manager, wife, and partner)

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What media might affect purchase (trade press, yellow pages, yell.com, social media, and newspapers)?

What might motivate someone to make a purchase from you (save money, feel good, stay current, be healthier)?

Be selective rather than general

Focus on a segment of the market to begin with. Win this segment and be seen as the specialist, it is often less costly and can bring the biggest gains.

Remember people prefer a specialist than a “Jack of all trades”.

The marketing message

Once you have developed your “elevator pitch”, told people what it is you provide; it is time to concentrate on persuading people to purchase your goods and services.

To do this we need to identify what it is that potential customers need (perceived or implied problems).

- Clearly state what it is that potential customers might need and indeed benefit from purchasing from you?
- Get across the message that you can satisfy this problem quickly for them
- Convince the potential customer that your business is the only one that can satisfy their needs.
- Provide examples / testimonials from happy customers that have benefited from your product or service.
- Prices and payment terms
- What guarantee you offer

The Marketing Medium

It is time to think about how you will get your message out, and reach your target audience, in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

Let us explore some methods and tips that may assist your business.

1. PR (press release)

This is something that you can obtain for free and whilst needs some thought and application, once successful can be replicated time and time again.

You should always start from the premise that editors have a blank piece of paper that they must fill with interesting copy that will enable them to sell advertising space throughout the publication. Dull, uninteresting copy will not sell newspapers and thereby no-one will spend money advertising within. They need you more than you need them is the mantra!!

Well written press releases, have a knock on benefit with social media channels.



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Things you should consider are:-

- Have you provided a quality photograph that shows you and your business off to maximum effect?
- Will the editor cut your article, arbitrarily and have you ensured that the key points are at the beginning of the article and thereby less likely to be the piece they cut?
- You should include Who, What, Why and Where elements to your article

N.B do not expect all your contact details being included as this is something you would pay for in a feature article.

Pros

- Will reach your target area and potentially your target demographic.
- Free
- Can be used in social media content to magnify impact
- Keeps you current and front of mind

Cons

- You will not control content, nor if and when published

2. Google My Business

If you have a business that relies on local customers then it is vital you consider the way people might search for your services. It is likely they will use a mobile or tablet device and expect instant results such as:-

Can they ring the shop?

Is there a mapping function with clear guide on how to get to you?

Check stock availability?

Arrange local delivery/ shop online?

Businesses such as tradesmen, retail shops, accountants, solicitors, dentists and vets etc. meet these criteria.

Google My Business is a free tool that allows local businesses to pretty much guarantee to appear on search results page 1.

An example would be as follows:-

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Get Started

IN BUSINESS : IN BLACKPOOL

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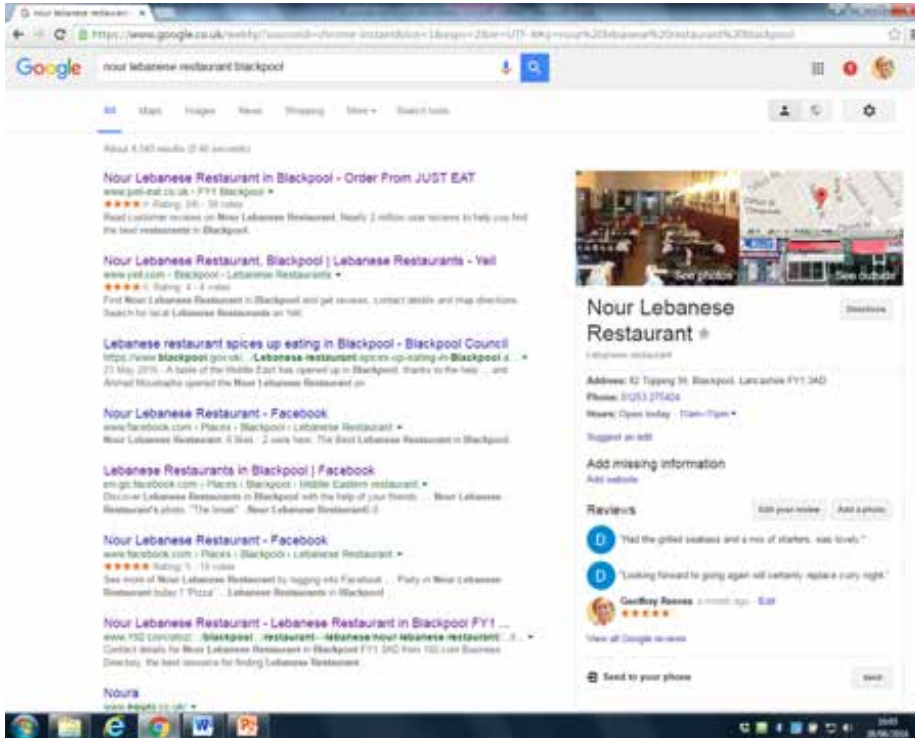
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You can see from above the value of being listed with Google My Business. The restaurant is highlighted on the left of the page. This is a free service. This restaurant had virtually no presence before.

Things you should consider are:-

- Local address including postcode
- Local phone number with std code
- Good quality photos
- Opening hours
- What goods or service you provide
- testimonials

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Pros

- Often on page 1 of Google
- Free
- Drives local interest and thereby business

Cons

- You need to constantly update and ensure good picture at all times

3. Print Advertising

Historically one of the first medium's chosen by businesses. But do you really need to advertise in magazines or the local paper? It is often non specific and therefore not targeted at your personal audience/ target base. It is expensive. It usually requires the advertisement to be part of a campaign, running over several days and months. The fear factor can kick in, and this can unwittingly tie you in to a lengthy contract that you are afraid to cancel, on the off chance tomorrow someone might see the advertisement, and if you are not in the publication they may go elsewhere.

You have no guarantee of success.

GOOD advertising, targeted, can be very effective.

Things you should consider are:-

- Will it provide you with a good chance of impact?
- Will it be placed on a page, inclusion night, where your potential customers might realistically be expected to notice the advertisement?
- Always add a code to your advertisement, this way you can measure the response rate.

Pros

- Hit a large audience in one go
- You can access free listings in publications such as Yell, BT Tradespace, Thompson.

Cons

- Often non focused
- Can be expensive
- 0.1% - 0.5% effective

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4. Printed Materials

Unless you are a graphic designer, ask yourself would you look at something cobbled together by someone that did not understand layout, colour and impact? Printed materials are potentially expensive, however, created effectively can have a targeted impact.

Things that you should consider:-

- Creating the printed material is all well and good; however, how it reaches your potential customer is equally as important. E.g. door to door, trade shows and shops.
- If you were reading the printed material would it interest you?
- Place a strong message in a central position on your printed material, to ensure immediate visual impact.
- Call to action must be included. Phone NOW, email me, visit our website.
- Do not forget to include contact details.
- Print only the quantity that you realistically need. They cost money, and can go out of date, look tired very quickly.

Pros

- Simple method of getting your message to the correct prospective audience
- Affordable
- Putting a time limit on them can produce an immediate potential response.

Cons

- Can end up in a bin
- Must be targeted
- Leaflets in particular, can produce between 2% and 10% response rate.

5. Useful Leaflet Distribution Idea

- If you are a tradesman, and have different customers daily, here is a really good way to target the correct customers, and at the right time.
- When you arrive at your first job of the day, arrive 20 minutes early!
- Distribute your leaflets either side of the road your van is parked on, always keeping your van in eye contact. This will take about 20 minutes. Why?
- Your van is your billboard and free!
- All the properties are neighbours of the person that you are doing the job for.

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- As a neighbour you are either known by them or seen as within their social strata.
- This acts as a subliminal referral. If it is good enough for him it is good enough for me syndrome.
- I know people that only use this method and have full order books.
- It passes all the tests mentioned above.

6. Websites

Over one billion people use the web as a first port of call when looking for a supplier.

- Things that you should consider:-
- Must be professional in appearance
- Updated regularly
- Impactful
- Must contain pictures, and other media such as links to YouTube, Twitter, FaceBook.
- Social media is the future (if not the present)
- Forums
- Blogs
- Email capability
- Links to other sites
- Search Engine optimised (SEO)

Pros

Extremely cost effective, given social media is often free.

Once created quite easy to maintain, if time consuming

There are lots of search engines that can promote your site free.

E Mail marketing is very effective

Cons

Time consuming, needs commitment

Takes time to reach page one on search engines, but stick at it!

Pay per click can be very expensive, if not targeted

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7. Social media

It is hard to imagine that anyone does not access one of the many social media platforms, and as such this is an advertisers dream platform, as well as the perfect vehicle for a business to engage with.

- Twitter is perfect for getting instant messages to your target audience in a short, concise way. You can include pictures, videos and links to blogs and other medium such as PR. The ability to get your point across concisely whilst including detailed links, images and videos makes this highly efficient.
- You can find a lot more information on Twitter for business by clicking on the link below:-
smallbusiness.linkedin.com
- Facebook not only interacts socially but is an effective medium to sell goods and services.
- You can find a lot more information on Facebook for business by clicking on the link below:-
www.facebook.com/business
- Instagram is perhaps the most efficient of all new social medium as it can use a picture or video to stimulate interest, get commented on, shared, and liked. All search engines promote photos and videos so you cannot lose if you include quality photos etc.
- You can find a lot more information on Instagram for business by clicking on the link below:-
business.instagram.com
- YouTube is the fastest growing social media platform, owned and promoted by Google. A well-produced YouTube video can only enhance your offering as well as elevate your Google ranking.
- You can find a lot more information on YouTube for business by clicking on the link below:- support.google.com/youtube/answer/1646861?hl=en-GB
- LinkedIn is THE Business to business networking social media group. Not only can you promote your offering to likeminded people you can get them to share with other people they follow. Photos, videos, blogs etc. can all be included on LinkedIn.
- You can find a lot more information on LinkedIn for business by clicking on the link below:-
smallbusiness.linkedin.com/
- WordPress is one of a number of free blogging platforms. Not only is this a great way to get your message out to an audience, you can use it to populate other social media at the click of a mouse. Highly efficient and widely followed.
- Pinterest can enable you to create a story board in pictures to showcase your goods and services.
- You can find a lot more information on WordPress for business by clicking on the link below:-
wordpress.com/create/

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Pros

Basic packages are free

Instant success

Can be linked together

Seen as part of an overall strategy

Cons

Time consuming

24/7 demand

Needs to be targeted

8. Advertising on social media

It is a very effective medium to advertise with, given that most social media sites can target your prospective audience by:

Age

Sex

Likes

Dislikes

Interests

Geography

Few mediums can provide this ability, and as such costs can be minimised and results measured with a high degree of accuracy.

Most sites provide analytics tools free of charge.

9. Networking groups

Networking groups can provide an opportunity to meet people in business and share ideas , gain local and trade information as well as gain new business.

Things to consider:-

- Give more than you take and listen more than you speak
- Do not expect instant success
- Have what you want to say prepared, as time will be limited to get across your message

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Pros

You can control costs by only attending those networking groups you think will be the best fit for your business. (Trial before you “buy”).

Cons

Often breakfast meetings, be prepared to extend your day

Be careful to avoid a pressure environment which some groups engender.

9. Word Of Mouth

Simply the best way to grow any business, however, it takes time.

Things to consider:-

- Do a good job; make someone happy, they will tell others
- Testimonials should be obtained as these are powerful marketing tools. Place on leaflets, websites, and social media (if permission obtained)

Pros

Positive chatter about you and your business fills order books

Cons

Reap what you sow. Unhappy customer will pass on the message to potential customers.

Final Thoughts

- Really think about the message you wish to get out there
- Always talk benefits, what it will do for them
- Is it consistent with every other part of my image?
- Testimonials really work.
- Have you remembered to put a call to action in your message?

AND

- Have you included contact details?