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10 Tips for Marketing Yourself and Your Business

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If you are like most independent contractors and/or executives of small businesses, you spend sleepless nights worrying about how you will acquire customers and grow sales. Therefore, marketing your business effectively becomes a critical component to your overall success.

Even if your company does not have a formal marketing or business plan yet, there are many cost-efficient things you can do to market and promote your company's products and services. Here are 10 simple, tactical ideas to put your marketing efforts on the right track:

- 1. Focus on Your Core Competencies**
Know your target market and the value your product or service will bring to them. Focus your sales and marketing efforts towards these groups. Avoid spending time trying to acquire customers you cannot properly serve.
- 2. Develop a Clear and Concise Message**
Create a 30 to 60-second statement that clearly explains what you do, for whom, and why your target audience should buy from you. Have this message become your company's mission statement and raison d'être. Practice your message and notice how your target audience reacts to it.
- 3. Create Collateral Materials**
Nothing says you are a viable business more than having a company logo, business cards, stationery, brochures, and possibly even a web site. Keep it all simple, and do not order more than a 3-6 month supply of printed materials. Once these pieces are in place, do not be shy about using them.
- 4. Join Networking Groups**
Join or form one or two networking groups with individuals you do not know very well. Tell people what you do and who your target market is. Help others by connecting them with potential suppliers or employers. In time, they will return the favor to you.
- 5. Network Every Day**
Networking is not limited to groups and networking meetings. Carry your business cards with you at all times and be prepared to talk about your company's mission statement at a moment's notice. Your next hot prospect might be standing behind you at the grocery store.
- 6. Leverage Your Current Customers**
Happy customers are your best sales people -- ask them to provide testimonials and/or references for prospects. Consider establishing a customer referral program, and provide free/discounted services or a monetary reward for every customer that they recommend.

7. **Develop Alliance Partners**

Form strategic partnerships with others who sell a complimentary product or service to your target market. These alliances can be as simple as sharing contacts and leads, or they might take on a more formal structure. Either way, the goal is to broaden your reach beyond your own network.

8. **Become an Industry Leader**

People like to buy from subject matter experts. Therefore, look for opportunities to share your skills and talents by writing articles or lecturing on a topic within your area of expertise. Even teaching a night course at the local college or community level will give you additional exposure.

9. **Don't be Afraid to Try**

If you are serious about growth, spend time outside your comfort zone and try new things. Sometimes new ideas will work, and other times they won't. Either way, the process will teach you something new and valuable about yourself and your business.

10. **Brainstorm with Others**

You are in business for yourself, but that does not mean you need to have all the answers yourself. Whether you are a natural born marketer or one that sees marketing concepts as completely foreign, kick around ideas with others whose opinions and values you trust. You never know where your next "big idea" will come from.

These are just 10 tactical ways in which you can easily market yourself and your business. There are many more ideas that can work as well. Use these approaches as the building blocks to acquire customers and grow sales. However, for the best results, it is recommended that you incorporate your tactical initiatives into an overall marketing or business plan that acts as the compass/guidepost for your company's day-to-day activities.

Engelman Management Group is a marketing and management consulting firm geared toward helping small to mid-size businesses plan, design and execute their growth goals.

For a FREE consultation on how to jump start your marketing plan, please contact Rob Engelman, President, Engelman Management Group, at either 847-945-7573 or via e-mail at rob@engelmanmanagement.com. <http://www.engelmanmanagement.com/>