

## How to Grow Your Business With Low Cost Marketing

### *Success Leaves Clues*

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When seeking to operate a thriving business, undoubtedly, the marketing aspect is an essential part of keeping any successful business in operation for the long haul. Many companies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to analyze Return on Investment (ROI) for their efforts in marketing and to determine which avenues of marketing will be most beneficial to their overall success and longevity while maximizing their allocation funds for marketing. However; some very successful businesses survive quite well on very little or no marketing at all. While this is a unique situation and does not work for everybody, it is worth exploring. How do these companies stay in business, much less become successful?

Motivational speaker Tony Robbins asserts in his 'Personal Power Program' that "success leaves clues." One successful business owner who has shown marked success over time is a man named Stew Leonard. Stew began his dairy and food store in Norwalk, Connecticut in 1969, along with 7 employees and built a financial empire. With current annual sales of approximately \$300 million and some 2,000 employees, Stew Leonard's 'Stew's' is still going strong. Stew's is the world's largest dairy and food store; it is also the Guinness Book of World Records "greatest sales per unit area of any single food store in the United States." When Stew was asked where he got all the good ideas he answered, "We learn from our customers. We'll try any new ideas – no matter how harebrained the idea sounds." Customer comment boxes are located conveniently throughout the store and are emptied and read at the end of each closing day. Stew's willingness to do things unconventionally and mindfulness to always listen to the customer are the primary and fundamental ways he markets his business. At the entrance of each of the Stew's locations there is a slab of granite with a saying inscribed that reads: Rule 1: The Customer is Always Right! Rule 2: If the Customer is Ever Wrong, Reread Rule 1. Stew's determination to stay connected to his customers is what has driven his business to great success. Furthermore, each employee understands Stew's vision and that "customer service cannot be a sometimes thing. It must be earned and re-earned every day."

Another successful company, that spends very little on advertising and marketing is Costco Wholesale, and yet somehow has become a household name. The founders of Costco also understand the importance of listening to their members. Each location has a customer comment box and the comments are handled on a daily basis. Customer comment cards are also read daily by the Regional Buying Office and suggestions for new products, as well as return of old products, are seriously taken into account. Phone calls to the members who have questions or concerns are also made by the warehouse and buying office staff. By keeping advertising costs low, Costco is better able to pass on savings to their members.

Both of the aforementioned businesses see the use of a Customer Comment Box as an essential part of their growth and success. It is also believed that if one person makes a suggestion or a comment, there is likely 10 to 20 other customers who will not take the time to say anything; they will simply take their business elsewhere. If a business owner loses sight of the customer, we begin lose everything.

### *In-House Marketing & Employee Education*

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An essential part of marketing for any business is not only the employees the owner or management chooses to hire but the training that each employee receives. After all, the people in your employ are representatives of the company as a whole. One bad experience with one employee can undermine any marketing efforts a business owner has strived to achieve. More important than any flyer, future event advertisement or coupon for a return-visit discount that you could take the time and trouble to print and place on a counter or wall in your place of business; taking the time and effort to train employees to share your company philosophy and encourage a positive customer experience can have more of an impact on return business than anything else. For instance, if a potential customer, possibly one who has come upon a flyer or publication promoting your business, calls for directions or to ask a question regarding services your business provides and has a bad experience, your business transaction may likely stop there and your return on investment becomes a big goose-egg! Hiring, training and keeping good employees are challenges that most business owners face.

However, an investment in staff education and promotion of personal development can be worth its weight in gold. When you take the human element into account with regard to marketing a business, it is important to recognize that we all desire to feel important and that our contribution matters. When people feel valued at their place of employment and feel as though they are making a worthwhile contribution to a team, they tend to stay on with the company longer; which can significantly reduce turnover and lower annual costs for rehiring and training future personnel. Further, employees who feel valued on the job tend to take more pride in the day to day tasks they are assigned; are less likely to show up late or call in sick; are less likely to steal from the company and overall; and do a better job than others who do not. By making an investment in your employees, and training them to share in your personal philosophy, they are more apt to look out for the companies' best interest and by this you create a trickle-down effect. The impact that of creating happy employees and a happy workplace generates is an invaluable way to market your business in-house. Therefore, making the investment in employee education and promotion can prove to be worth its weight in gold.

One company, called Results Through Motivation (RTM), has been very successful in doing just that. RTM began with a philosophy and made the integration of employees and customer relations a primary focus. Within an employee's very first week on the job they were to memorize the 'Six P's of the RTM Philosophy': Purpose, People, Planning, Perfection, Profit, and Pride. At the end of the week the employee was to recite the Six P's and give their interpretation of what they meant. Further, RTM continued to instill their vision, mission and purpose into their training program and the people who work with RTM tend to achieve great results, and is reflected in their sales and profits since its inception in 1983. RTM posts the following in all of their places of business:

- Our Vision: To be the premier quick service food company in the world.
- Our Mission: Quality Food, Fast and Friendly.
- Our Purpose: To make money, have fun and make a difference in people's lives.

By creating an atmosphere of good spirit and team effort, employees become an integral part of helping forward your business in your intended direction and as a result, they do much of your in-house marketing for you!

### References:

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Funding Universe., "RTM Resturant Group" - Web, 27 July 2011, <<http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/RTM-Restaurant-Group-Company-History.html>>

*Note: More and more in this blog, I will be illustrating general marketing approaches with examples of specific challenges faced by practicing marketers. For one example of this, see my recent guest post, Marketing for Long-Distance and Mail-In Services, on nushue.com.*

### [Marketing / Advertising Online for Dummies](#)

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As you begin to consider marketing or advertising on-line, you may be contemplating which Internet service is best suited to your business needs and which is going to give you the biggest return on your investment. Marketing services currently available over the Internet today can be found on Google, Yahoo!, Bing, Go Daddy and a variety of other search engines. When considering marketing your business through any of these sites. some things to take into account are: accessibility, products available, how you want to pay for the services rendered and additional user friendly options. Google's integration of the services they provide has set the bar, as they have most of their products available to users on one, user friendly, login platform. Further, most other available search engines strive to attain the success of Google as it is the most popular search engine today and many company owners have found it a tried and true means to advertise their business. Even our modern day vernacular reflects the success of Google; when someone thinks to look something up on the World Wide Web – they are likely to say 'Oh, I'll just Google that!' In addition, approximately 80% of all searches performed on the Internet occur on Google's search engine. Some of the products that Google has to offer to small businesses include: Google Adwords, a method by which business owners can narrow advertising to their target market. Google Documents, which allows for editing documents between multiple users. Google Calendar, can also be used by multiple users and also has a sync option for some mobile devices. Google mail or a Gmail accounts are also available at no charge. Due to its superior accessibility, products and service readily available and user friendly applications, most people who specialize in search engine marketing would recommend Google.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) refers to advertising by the use of search engines, where ads are placed within the right margin or at the top of the search results page. Depending on how specifically the text content typed in by a person searching is to the content provided on your website or ad, the more likely you are to appear with the first several listings. Further, depending on how much you are willing to pay

to advertise on Google or any search engine, your ad could appear at the top or in the right-hand margin.

When comparing on-line ad pricing you can choose from the following options: Cost Per Thousand Impressions (CPM); where your ad will appear one thousand times, to people who use keywords within their search that match the ones found within your website; or a Cost Per Click (CPC) where you will pay for only the clicks people make on to your listing. CPM advertising, for local advertisers will run \$0.10 to \$3.00 on average while CPC will average anywhere from \$.50 to \$5.00 for local advertising. Some things to bear in mind when generating your on-line presence and using these services to advertise are:

- Who is my target audience?
- How many people currently search for my type of service day to day?
- What am I willing to spend to attract people to my business?
- Can I attempt to advertise on my own or would it be more advantageous to hire someone who knows more about search engine marketing?

In an effort to maximize your business efforts, you may want to consider hiring such a professional.

Note: One important aspect of online marketing is online social marketing and networking, a particular case of the broader concept of social marketing, on which see my recent article, Recruiters, Headhunters and HR Professionals: Social Marketing and Social Networking Experts.

### ***Don't Hire a Marketing Team - Join One!***

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Marketing returns are an important consideration to any business or corporation. Investing the time and monies into marketing requires a lot of trust and communication with other people; some of whom work behind the scenes and you may never meet face to face. If you want to take your business marketing into your own hands, do not hire a marketing team - join one.

Marketing, referral or networking groups facilitate the meeting of fellow, local business owners in your area and generally meet once a week. For every area of location, each referral network in a community generally has several chapters to choose from. Each chapter provides an exclusive membership to one person within their field of business. This means, that if you are a general contractor, you will be the only general contractor in the group or chapter; or if you are an optometrist, you will be the only optometrist in the group and so on. If another like business owner already holds a chair within that chapter another local chapter is easy to find.

The benefit of being the only business owner in your field within the group is so that the other members will refer the people they meet and know only to you. Setting aside time once a week to meet with fellow business owners in your community can prove to be an invaluable investment to the future growth of your business. These meetings are held in the early morning and are structured to meet the individual needs and vision of every person within the group. At every meeting you will be given the opportunity to share who you are, what you do, where you are located and the kind of referral you are looking for. You are encouraged to bring business cards and / or flyers to each meeting so the other

members of the group have something to pass along when they refer you to their friends, family and other contacts. During each meeting you will also be given forum to give and receive referrals with the other members of the group. Getting to know local business people in your area and relying on word of mouth are two of the most cost effective ways you can market your business. The challenge for some in these marketing groups is weekly attendance. However; since your participation within the chapter is exclusive to one person of your profession, you are holding a position in the group that could be attended by someone else who may be a more consistent source of referrals for the other participants who do show up every week.

There is a nominal fee to join, an annual due and a fee for to cover the cost of your breakfast every week. However; most participants of these groups have found great success using this referral system of marketing and enjoy the opportunity to help grow each other's businesses. Two of the most successful referral marketing teams are Business Network Inc. (BNI) and Team Referral Network (TEAM).

These groups always have a positive atmosphere and are a source of encouragement to any local business owner; they are proof that marketing your own business can be fun! If you are curious about joining a marketing group, I would recommend checking out TEAM, as the first two breakfasts are free to newcomers.

#### **References:**

TEAM Referral Network: Together Everyone Achieves More., "Don't Hire a Sales Team,.. Join One!" Web, 28 July 2011, <<http://www.teamreferralnetwork.com/>>

BNI Local Business – Global Network., BNI Home Page;; Web, 29 July 2011 < <http://www.bni.com/>>

Note: On a related note, see my article on On-Site Service Providers and their Role in Marketing Your Brand.

### ***Community Marketing***

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Marketing a business with the use of the Internet can be great for some, and not so great for others. Many factors come into play as the focus on generating 'hits' and 'leads' is tedious and time consuming and may even incur out of pocket expense; depending on what service you use to promote your business or website. What did people do before the Internet existed? How did we survive without the World Wide Web? Creating a presence on over the Internet may be one, good way to grow your business. Although; another great and inexpensive way to promote your business is to take a walk around your community and introduce yourself to local business owners and shop workers; and if so inclined, hand them your business card. While you may, or may not see immediate results, at the very least you are planting seeds.

Another way to market yourself in your community is to give people something to talk about or provide a unique attraction for patrons to enjoy while they visit your establishment. Thinking out-side the box when it comes to marketing is also a good skill to employ. One new restaurant owner found that his location and visibility was an issue and passersby would often think he was closed during business hours. After months of having employees pass out flyers, in parking lots and door to door, people would still

approach his establishment, often open the front door, peer in and ask “are you open?” After months of hearing this he knew he had to do something. So, he exercised his creativity and asked an artist friend to place some attractive, lifelike, mannequins dining at the tables in the window during business hours. The mannequins provided a visible sign that conveyed the message of ‘yes, we are open and people are currently enjoying the food here.’ Once inside the customers would see that there were mannequins in a restaurant and would have a good laugh. It generated a conversation and his restaurant became known for ‘the place to eat with the cool mannequins.’

Thinking outside the box and having the courage to do something unconventional when it comes to marketing often pays off. Some other ways business owners have used to generate interest is in way of creative signage or a positive, uplifting quote on a storefront that creates the message that ‘good, happy people work here.’ Appealing to the senses is a simple way to market your business and even retain good customers. Finding something simple in way of décor may also appeal to clientele and keep them stimulated if they have to wait to be helped. Providing coffee, tea or snacks also has great appeal. Another way to create a calm environment is by having an attractive fish tank highly visible area in your waiting area. Remember to make your place of business a child-friendly place to visit as this is a great appeal to parents who often have to bring their children along. Providing crayons, coloring books, Highlights Magazines or even video games may also provide stimulation and a quieter environment. If customers have a positive and memorable experience while they visit your place of business is it a sure-fire way to retain future business and encourage them to refer others.

Note: Needless to say, “community” is a highly diversified concept. For one thing, most communities are divided into two major subgroups according to our gender. Each poses special challenges for marketers. For a discussion of one set of such challenges, see my post on What Women Want: Special Considerations in Marketing of Beauty Products & Services.

### *Internet Marketing – Inexpensive Alternatives to Search Engine Advertisement*

Some of the marketing services currently available over the Internet today can be found on Google, Yahoo!, Bing, Go Daddy and a variety of other search engines. If you do not want to pay for these services and desire to create a presence on the Web you may want to consider some social sites to do some advertizing for you. Some of these alternatives for less costly, or free, Internet marketing can be found on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Meetup.com and Gmail - just to name a few.

Using these less expensive alternatives may not get you to the top of the Google page however; these social networking services are also being fished daily for key-words found within the text contained on the pages generated on each of them. Further, the people who use these alternatives have found a way to create leads and generate interest that has proved to be an invaluable part of doing business.

The following is a breakdown of some of the services you can expect to find of each of the aforementioned sites:

- LinkedIn will allow you to create a personal and/or professional profile where you may include who you are, where you are located and a detailed description of the services your company - provides.
- Facebook provides the user with a personal profile as well as an option to generate a business profile within their existing account. It is easy to toggle between your two pages and share your business profile with all of your Facebook friends and gives them an opportunity to click a 'Like' button at the top of your profile. Clicking on the 'Like' option generates another post to your friends Newsfeed whereby all of your friends' contacts are then also able to click to view your business page instantly.
- Gmail provides a free email service as well as a chat option that several companies use for sales meetings as well as to train employees all over the globe. One business owner shared with me recently that she "found the people that don't do well in the beginning are the ones that don't use the Gmail chat option."
- Twitter allows users to create a public account that gives the option to post your page to Google for free. Utilizing the status message on Twitter also gives your friends and 'followers' updates to what may be happening with you or your business instantly.
- YouTube is a free viral service that has been used by people to express their more creative side. Creating a professional business video and posting it to YouTube is a great way to educate the public at large about the services your company provides and to generate interest and leads that will inevitably grow your business.
- Meetup.com is unique in that it allows people to search for events taking place within their local community. Posting an event on this site can greatly benefit a business owner, or someone looking to generate leads and is well worth taking the ten minutes to sign up and post your event to their site.

Additionally, if you are looking for an inexpensive way to promote your business, Vista Print provides a wide array of creative services that business owners can use to market themselves at very little cost. The first 250 business cards ordered through VistaPrint are free.

While there seems to be a plethora of information and services available on the World Wide Web, the Internet, as a vehicle of marketing and doing business, is still in its infancy stages of what can be created and accomplished. As Walt Disney said, "We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

### **References:**

Geoffrey Kutnick, Marketing Director, Rudeluv Designs & Marketing, RD&M,; Lecture; 26, July 2011

### *Marketing - Plan the Work and Work the Plan*

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As business people who dream of owning and operating a personal business, it is essential for us to create a written plan of action. Having a management action plan gives a road-map to the desired success ahead. Setting short and long term goals are a good way to help you stay focused when the

path of entrepreneurship becomes overwhelming. Some other things to consider when creating a plan of action include location, target market, a competitive market analysis, vision and goals, mission statement, start-up and operating costs; profit and loss cost analysis, insurance and business license fees, advertising allocation, as well as any additional help will be needed, by way of employees or outside marketing consulting. All of these areas of consideration are only some of the components that go into creating any good business plan. Putting your business ideas in writing, along with specific facts and figures can take some time and effort and compiling components of a solid business plan is an often arduous process. Some business owners make the mistake of rushing into business dealings without putting anything in writing and avoid developing a clear and conscientious plan however; a prudent business person will make the investment to do so. Most entrepreneurs find that their businesses plans provide an invaluable tool for doing business and lend a greater sense of clarity as to what can be anticipated on the road that lies ahead. While you may want to seek advice during the often laborious process of compiling your business plan, it is not a good idea to have someone else write it for you. Since your business plan will be a reflection of your goals, aspirations and dreams for the future, it is something very personal. Most business owners have found that their Mission Statement is the most valuable component to their business plan. It establishes a clear picture of your intention and can later provide you with a great tool for training employees so they are able to see the bigger picture. A good mission statement can also be modified and used in much of your advertising and business dealings in the future. Further, written documentation that illustrates your intention of proposed business may also be useful if you intend to seek additional start-up capital from a financial institution.

If you are not sure how to obtain information needed to create other portions of your business plan, say a good competitive market analysis for example, your local Chamber of Commerce (COC) is a good place to start. The COC is an organization that helps local business owners by providing them with a wide array of information pertaining to the business dealings within their community and can offer you with some valuable information useful for you when writing your business plan. However; while the public information provided by the COC may help you with gathering general information you will need to for your competitive analysis, information may be limited and will require creativity in putting it all together. Further, if you need help with writing your business plan, as most everyone does, you will likely spend a lot of time on the Internet searching for examples of existing plans or even paying for services to companies who assert great success with 'helping people just like you.' While some great information and services may be found over the Internet, questions and concerns may not be answered completely as you attempt to tailor your plan to be a true reflection of your company. One of the most valuable ways many people have found in creating a business plan is to take a college course. If higher education is not within your means, consider a community college, which is much more affordable.

Once you complete your business plan, it will likely be something you will be proud of for years to come. Remember to continue to set short and long term goals once you are in business to help you work your plan and achieve success.

Note: Needless to say, your marketing plan needs to be comprehensive and well integrated. Sme weight in it should be given to the appropriate deployment of customer testimonials. See my thoughts on Marketing Using Customer Testimonials on [computersinpersonnelhr.com](http://computersinpersonnelhr.com).

## *Plan the Work and Work the Plan: Business Plan and Goal Setting*

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Once you complete your business plan, it will likely be something you will be proud of for years to come. Remember to continue to set short and long term goals once you are in business to help you work your plan and achieve success.

Note: Some details of your marketing plan are likely to be affected by the details of your particular project. For a discussion of local marketing and its challenges, consult my guest article, Marketing Local Services: Tips and Special Considerations, on the blog of [boston-car-service.com](http://boston-car-service.com).

### *How to Market your MLM Business – Without Alienating Your Friends and Family*

If you have recently become involved with a Multi Level Marketing or have been working with one for any length of time, you are familiar with the challenges that these types of sales structures involve. Initially, when you were approached, the venture most likely sounded exciting and a great way to make additional income or even secure your financial future. However, after writing out your list of one to two hundred personal contacts, as you were encouraged to do after you signed up, and you began to share with your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers and even people you looked up from high school; you may have experience some unexpected resistance or blatant lack of support and most likely felt discouraged.

Most people are skeptical in our day and age, as they should be, and are further resistant when it comes to readily parting with their money especially if it is not buying something meaningful to them. You may have also encountered more resistance from people who are close to you than you had anticipated. After all, this is something good you are doing and promises to bring you good fortune; why are they not at least happy for you? Just because you are now here to share the good news with people, you cannot expect others to share your vision.

In an effort to avoid putting people off, make sure to have experiences and conversations with your friends where you do not initiate the topic or details of your business and find other things to talk about.

In knowing that you are still the same person as before you began this business, and have not become a zealot, they are more likely to be curious and open when the topic should arise. If they happen to ask you about your business dealings specifically, then they have opened the door. Further, do not trick them into meeting you for brunch whereby you plan to bring your business material to share with them. This method may prove to not only be unfruitful, but it may cause a silent dis-ease when it comes to spending time with them in the future.

After you have exhausted the leads found in your personal rolodex you will need to find ways to make other potential leads and contacts. As you make new contacts in your community, here are the Top Rules for Initiating Conversations about the MLM Service or Product You Are Offering:

1. Never, ever, ever lie when you are asked if what you are selling is “one of those pyramid or marketing a schemes.” It is often tempting to become defensive and not disclose the full nature of what you are a part of when questions of that nature are asked of you. However; a sense of humility and full disclosure is often the best way to be successful and keep your integrity intact.

Further, if you are not honest about the multi-level nature of your new business and later the person that you denied it to happens to consider investing, they will know that you initially lied to them and it may very well not only lose you a sale, but you lose your credibility as well.

2. Be enthusiastic but avoid over talking your product and sharing long-winded details. While people may initially be curious and charmed by your excitement, being over-eager is also never a good way to ensure closure of a deal.
3. Be a good listener; quietly discover what the possible personal appeal your product could very well provide to someone just like them. People are more attracted to others who listen and feel appreciated. Each person is different and we all have internal factors that motivate us individually; finding out what a person's dreams, hopes and goals are for the future is a good way to lay a foundation.
4. Be sincere. If you are looking at them as just a number, or by the money they can potentially generate under you they will know it. Most people can smell insincerity coming from over a mile away. Believing in the product you sell is essential to your personal success. Having a personal story to tell, with regard to the use of the product you are offering endears any potential customer to you and they are more likely to make the time to listen to your presentation or even tell others about you.

Once you have scheduled an appointment with the express intention of sharing more about your business; you can share all of the information and insurmountable amount of research your company has provided you with. Then, if the person appears indifferent to what you have to share, is full of excuses as to why they just don't think it is right for them or even tells you out-right they are just not sold; try to take it in stride. Do not take it personally and moreover; never be too assertive as it is a huge turn-off.

If you are a person with dogged determination who also firmly believes that the product you are selling is a superior value and great benefit, yet are still having a rough time meeting your sales goals and desired financial success; consider others who have also met with great adversity when they too believed in the product they were selling. Colonel Sanders, for example, the famous entrepreneur, who created a financial empire with his simple chicken recipe, leaves a legacy of what your kind of determination can accomplish.

### **References:**

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### ***Marketing for Long-Distance and Mail-In Services***

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When marketing a service that is sold and fulfilled over the internet or via traditional mail, there are some concerns and challenges you may run into that are unique to such industries. In these situations,

the customer often feels detached from the service provider, and not all people are comfortable doing business in this impersonal way. Furthermore, any such service that requires payment before the service is rendered, or that requires the customer to make another form of investment—mail something of theirs to the service provider for repair, for example—can arouse mistrust and doubt in the potential customer. So, how to get around these pitfalls and prevent losing customers before they even place their order?

Let's start with the issues surrounding marketing of services rendered over the internet or via mail. There are certain customer segments that are accustomed to having services such as repairs, dry-cleaning, appraisal, etc. rendered locally, by a physical individual in a physical location. They have the feeling that they know where to find this person, or the knowledge that they have been in business in their neighborhood for a certain amount of time, and therefore feel more secure leaving their favorite blouse or supposed antique with them. With services that are rendered over a large distance, you lose this personal connection with the customer, and more specifically the opportunity to build trust. You know you run a solid, honest business, but the potential first-time customer doesn't see it, they just see a website or an ad. You must therefore find unique ways to build trust and rapport with your customers over a long distance, potentially without ever seeing them or speaking to them.

So, what to do? Here are the Top 10 Ways to Gain Potential Customer Trust across Long Distances:

- Photographs and videos of your physical business are very helpful in establishing legitimacy in the customer's mind. For the average customer, this may alleviate any suspicions that you are just a front or a phony.
- Certain customers will never send in personal property unless they've spoken to someone. Always list a phone number where you customers and prospects can reach a real human voice (or get a call back from one).
- Use customer testimonials prominently. The words of other happy customers are worth their weight in gold.
- Get rated on Yelp, Google Places, CitySearch, and any other directory where consumers can rate and review businesses. Again, this establishes legitimacy, proves that your business does indeed exist, and—hopefully—shows that you are well-loved by people who have tried your service.
- If you offer mail-in service, provide an envelope with instructions, and consider paying for postage. The customer will see this as an investment in your relationship with them, building trust.
- Provide regular updates as to the status of the customer's order. Never make the customer feel like you've "disappeared" with their beloved blouse, precious family photos, or whatever it is you do.
- Place a mission statement in the form of a letter from the business owner on your website, preferably with a photograph of the owner. Showing pride in the business gains customer trust,
- Make sure your website, brochures, etc. look professional. If you show that you have invested in creating high-quality customer-facing collateral, it demonstrates to the customer

that you are in it for the long haul and creates the impression that you take pride in your business.

- Be specific about what the customer should expect, including pricing, payment terms, timeline, etc.
- Have a clear policy that favors in the customer in case their items are damaged or lost.

When someone considers using a service for the first time that requires them to hand over something they love to a stranger, trust is the biggest factor in play. You run a high quality, trustworthy, long-standing business. Make sure the prospects that can't physically come to your place of business have multiple other ways to ascertain this fact.

### *Recruiters, Headhunters and HR Professionals: Social Marketing and Social Networking Experts*

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I often get questions about social network marketing, and about social marketing in general. “Does it really work?” “Do you get results?” Nobody knows the value of social marketing—whether old-school networking or via tools that have recently entered the scene such as Facebook and LinkedIn—better than the human resources or recruiting marketing professional. In this profession, marketers have always relied on social networks in the past, often participating in recruitment fairs, professional conferences for the industry in which they recruit, or by simply putting the word out there in the relevant industry with the knowledge that people who work in a certain industry know others who have similar backgrounds and educations.

With the tools available to the marketing branch of a headhunting or recruiting firm, the importance of this sort of marketing has grown exponentially. Today, a single LinkedIn or Facebook post to the right person or group will get the word out about your headhunting or recruiting firm to a potentially global network in absolutely no time. When you speak to marketing professionals from the HR industry about social network marketing, it seems they are some of the most excited about it amongst us (that is, amongst marketing professionals in general). That is in large part because they are the ones who already intuitively know how to use it best, having always relied heavily on social and professional networks long before they became digitized.

What can we learn from our marketing colleagues whose job it is, in fact, to market a professional network? Here are the Top 10 Tips of Professional & Social Network Marketing as I have understood them from conversations our marketing colleagues in the recruitment industry:

- Identify your champions. Champions are clients or customers who would give you a 9 or 10 out of 10 when asked to rate you, and from whom you are likely to receive referrals.
- Identify your champion's social and professional networks, including contacts and friends. Send information to your champion and encourage him to share with said networks.
- Allow your champions and other satisfied customers to build your social network channels for you. While you may provide them with the “hardware” in the form of discussion groups,

boards, etc., encourage them and allow them to take the lead. Encourage them to answer other's questions, engage with potential customers, etc.

- Be active online. Give your customers things to “like.”
- Be active in promoting your specific needs online and off. Looking for a group of biostatisticians to whom to market your recruiting company? Or a group of people who love scrapbooking? Get in touch with biostatisticians you've placed in the past, or get all the moms at the local elementary school to “like” you or review you on Yelp. Whatever works.
- Determine if you need to focus locally or globally to make most effective use of your social marketing efforts. Note the contrast in the examples above involving a recruiting firm focused on bringing in the best global talent in the biotechnology industry, and a shop/studio that fulfill all a scrapbook fanatic's dreams. In the former, you want to target a global network. In the latter, you want to target a local network.
- If targeting global networks, make sure you: target several champions globally to help you get the word out; social and professional networking websites are a highly efficient way to target global networks.
- If targeting a local network, along with local advertisement and the internet, you have the benefit of easy word-of-mouth marketing and the ability to find clusters (literally) of your potential customers. Figure out where people with your customer profile hang out and go there. In the scrapbook example, one might target people with children (schools, ice cream shops, toy stores), and people who are interested in crafts (post ads near the local craft store, make friends with your local flower arrangement teacher, etc.)
- Provide high quality information that is likely to be of interest to your networks to make them feel that they get some sort of privilege by being networked with you. For example, employment statistics for a specific industry are very likely to interest people in any position in the industry, while if you only share and distribute job openings, marketing information about your firm, etc., there will likely be people in or near your network who will lose interest.
- Never bash the competition in the social or professional networking environment. This includes online networks, professional conferences, etc. If you must resort to such tactics, be discreet, don't Tweet. Or let your champions take care of that for you.

### *On-Site Service Providers and their Role in Marketing Your Brand*

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In a business that offers services that are delivered to the customer, there is a piece of marketing strategy that sometimes gets overlooked. It is of major importance to realize that the people that take your service to the field are in large part responsible for your company's image, and therefore have a large effect on establishing your brand. Service providers—as well as sales people that are out in the field—could reasonably be considered part of your marketing department, and should be treated like and made aware that they are the brand. Because they are the face of your company and your brand in the eyes of the client, they require guidance and preparation in terms of representing your brand and establishing your brand reputation. As marketing professionals, it is our job to make sure our

customer-facing service providers understand the importance of the brand and of being brand champions.

What is the difference between an on-site service provider that has been coached on these concepts and one that has not? The key is that the service provider that understands his role as part of your marketing team will talk to the customer about the brand and service, and tie what he does to the brand. For example, if your service happens to be carpet cleaning, the service tech may comment to the customer that the fragrance of your carpet cleaning solution is specific to the brand, especially if the customer likes it. If complimented, he may again point to the quality of the service provided by your brand, and plant the idea that the customer may always expect the same great service from your company, regardless of who the tech is that comes to deliver the service. A service tech that has not been trained as a brand representative, on the other hand, may simply do the job and get out, minimizing client interaction. Instead of tying a customer's satisfaction to the brand, he may simply say "thank you, glad you like it" when complimented.

There are several things you should provide to your on-site service techs in order to help them represent your brand in a way that is rationalized to the rest of your marketing effort and vision. Here are my Top Five Tips for Training On-Site Service Providers to be Brand Representatives:

- Make sure every one of your field service people is aware of the expectation that they are to market your brand to the customer. Just having the concept can go a long way.
- Ask your field techs, service providers, etc. to tie customer satisfaction to the brand. For example, ask them to accept compliments, tips, and even criticism with a tie-in back to the brand. For example, if they receive a compliment as to the quality of their service, they should be trained to highlight that the brand deserves the compliment as much as does their own personal contribution. For example, "Thank you. All of us at Best Cleaning Company pride ourselves on quality. We look forward to doing business with you again."
- Send your service providers out with marketing literature or small giveaways (i.e. refrigerator magnets with you company name and contact info) to promote the brand.
- Train your service providers in gracefully accepting criticisms from the customer while making the customer feel that your entire company is available to help resolve the problem.
- Give your service providers some basic marketing sound bites they can use to promote your brand in a way that is in line with your general marketing strategy. Train them to be able to easily explain why the customer should choose your company over any other—in other words, train them to be able to state your unique value proposition.

### *What Women Want: Special Considerations in Marketing of Beauty Products & Services*

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Targeting your business, product or service, with the female consumer in mind, is one of the easiest ways to attain successful return on your investment in the marketing world today. The myriad of services in the Beauty Industry that offers to make a woman look beautiful and feel more attractive are innumerable. The Beauty Industry in the United States alone generates upwards of \$11.2 Billion dollars

annually. If you are currently considering opening a salon or spa to capitalize on some of the profits made in this industry, it may very well prove to be a worthwhile venture for you.

Additionally, it is estimated that only 31 % of all users of Salon and Spas patrons are men however; it is believed that the trend within this demographic is on the rise and future growth can only be speculated since businesses of this nature rarely market themselves to male clientele.

The diverse menu of options provided by places offering beauty services can range anywhere from manicures, pedicures, Botox injections to reduce wrinkles, body wraps which reduce the signs of sagging and aging, to electronically removing hair follicles at the root in tender places on their body. These services may be painful and even costly but women are willing to put themselves through the experience to attain their desired results.

Most women in our society have been taught from very early age, that it is important to look pretty and to be appealing to others; as well as to be attractive enough to find a boyfriend or a husband. Some may even find it helpful to pick up a beauty or fashion magazine for advice on how to look younger; or how to attract, or even keep, the men in our lives happy with how we look. Advertising in a major fashion magazine may also provide great returns as billions of copies are sold around the globe every day.

If you are a business owner who wants to make real great money in the beauty industry, you may consider opening a facility that provides higher ticket items and can charge much more for services rendered such as; operable procedures to augment the breasts or surgical removal of unwanted, sagging skin from the belly, buttocks or thighs. However, the overhead with this venture goes beyond assuring that your employees attended the local massage therapy course or beauty school as you will need to hire a medical professional who is Board Certified and State Licensed and has good insurance coverage. Additionally, you may require additional insurance coverage when if you consider this business venture, as it is wise to protect yourself against vicarious liability, should something unforeseeably go array.

While, one may think the means of attaining true beauty to be barbaric in nature; women are often willing to undergo anything from having a known neurotoxin injected into their face, to having their chest cut open in an effort to have greater physical appeal and further; are willing to reach deep into their pocketbooks in an effort to look beautiful.

Given the nature of the target market within the beauty industry, appealing to women's sense of vanity and vulnerability is simple. Societal pressure and the need for women to feel attractive and be loved is enough to provide any business owner with fertile ground to plant and reap great financial harvest.

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### *Marketing for the Highly Discerning Customer: Winning Trust through Providing Information*

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In most industries, it can be said with confidence that there is a certain type of customer that requires special effort due to their deep knowledge of your industry or their discerning taste. This customer knows a great deal about the applications of your product, his needs and the needs of his community, and the details regarding your products and those of your competitors. In order to market to such a knowledgeable, discerning customer, basic marketing techniques will not be enough to grab their attention and win them over to your product. In some cases, this customer will know more than not only your lead marketer, but also your product manager and others in your organization about the needs of the market into which you are trying to sell. This type of customer requires a very special approach based on facts, knowledge, and information that is highly interesting and specific to the customer. Marketing brochures with information in bullet points and beautiful colors will offer no great appeal, but high quality, detailed information will.

Why is the marketing technique of providing high-quality, detailed information specific to the industry and customer needs far and above that which is specific to your product so effective with this customer type? The reason, simply, is that this customer clearly cares deeply about the matter at hand, or about the problem to which your product provides a solution, and therefore has an implicit trust for an individual—and a company—that has taken the time to acquire deep knowledge on the subject at hand and/or seems to treat it with a passion equal to that of the customer. The flip-side of the coin is that the highly discerning or knowledgeable customer is not likely to take you seriously if you appear not to know very much about his needs. You are a knowledgeable company, so show yourself off as one!

How do you create and information-rich, interesting, and useful information limb to your marketing strategy, and how do you leverage it? Let's look at a specific example. Let's say you market a luxury transportation solution to for horses. Your customer is perhaps the owner or care taker of a prize competitive horse. The customer will have an extremely in-depth level of knowledge as to the needs of his horse, as well as a passion for meeting those needs. If you meet that customer's passion and provide information beyond what is already available to him, you will gain his trust and begin to build a strong relationship. Providing rich, informative materials regarding general horse care, comfort, and other equipment will accomplish a few key marketing goals for you:

- Build trust
- Build the impression that your company has the expertise to provide the BEST solutions
- Keep the discerning customer on your web page, in your showroom, or wherever the info provided resides
- Keep the customer coming back to you
- Differentiate yourself from the competition
- Set yourself up as an industry expert

## *Marketing Using Customer Testimonials*

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In the marketing profession, it is common practice to collect customer testimonials in order to allow prospects that are considering purchasing your product why others in a position similar to theirs found useful. As much as we try to translate the value of our products to our customer, the customer testimonial is highly effective because for the customer; it mimics asking advice from a friend or a professional contact. To the prospect, words from a customer are real, in that they are not written as part of that person's job nor to "market" the product. Marketing copy, on the other hand, can be seen as contrived, because it is written with a certain goal in mind and may or may not reflect the writer's actual opinion. Customer testimonials provide a sense of objectivity in statements made about your product. Customer testimonials, however, will have a stronger impact if you focus on best practice, instead of simply collecting and posting customer testimonials as part of your common practice.

Here are 10 Tips for Effective Use of Customer Testimonials, Customer Testimonial Best Practice:

- Whether in print or online marketing, do not lump all of your testimonials into one section. Fewer people will read a page of testimonials than will read a testimonial if one is located at the top of every web page, sprinkled throughout your brochure, etc.
- Draw attention to your customer testimonials by distinguishing them from marketing copy using font, font size, pop-out text boxes, color, etc. If a photo of the customer that authored the testimonial is available, use it.
- Where possible, guide your customers in providing customer testimonials. Solicit customer testimonials by sending out customer satisfaction questionnaires, and write the questionnaires with customer testimonial goals in mind.
- On your web site, encourage customers to give you feedback (and acknowledge that what they say be used for marketing purposes). Provide a prominent link to a customer questionnaire, or simply a feedback box. Ask the customer to tell you what they think.
- Do not edit or alter customer testimonials (aside from technical fixes, such as correcting spelling errors). The most effective customer testimonials are real.
- Thematically pair customer testimonials with the place where they appear in your marketing collateral. For example, place a testimonial that highlights the ease-of-use of your product next to the section of your website or brochure that addresses ease-of-use.
- Use bold font, italics, etc. to highlight what you consider to be the main or most attractive point of the customer testimonial. Draw attention to the "thesis statement" of the testimonial.
- Where possible, solicit customer testimonials in multimedia formats. Photos, videos, etc. are highly effective testimonial formats. For example, the statement "we love our new patio furniture" is made highly effective by a picture of the family enjoying the furniture. A customer testimonial regarding the customer's satisfaction with their new HR software becomes that much more real in video format.

- Include the customer's real identifying information (ask for permission first), such as full name and job title. This highlights the fact that your customer testimonials come from real people, and help the reader relate to the author of the testimonial.
- Keep your customer testimonials fresh. By collecting customer feedback continuously, you will be able to keep your testimonials in line with any changes in the conditions of your customers' industry or needs of your customer base.

### *Marketing Local Services: Tips and Special Considerations*

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Marketing for a business that provides a local service to a given city or region requires some special considerations by you, the marketing professional. Unlike companies that provide global or national services, or services that are not location-dependent, marketers that promote a local business need to focus on A) targeting local customers effectively, and B) not wasting marketing budget on advertising to customers who are outside the service region.

Targeting local customers means knowing where your market is, where they shop, what they read, and what their network looks like. For example, if you market a local car service that has a high-end component that is responsible for a significant portion of your margin, it is important that you target the people in your area that are looking for such services: corporate executive, corporate executive assistants, party planners, wedding planners, high-level sales peoples, high-end tourist agencies etc. This is one example, but you should think about all your marketing decisions in the local service situation in terms of targeting your specific local market while saving money and maximizing ROI by staying local and specific.

### *Top Tips for Effective Local Marketing:*

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- Define your market very specifically. If marketing a car service, as in our previous example, the definition might look something like "Boston-based management level professionals that travel for business." Try to come up with a definition that is very specific but complete. If you market has several tiers to it—for example the management level professional and teenagers that rent limos for the prom—you may need to consider several different market definitions.
- If you are in the situation where your market has several specific tiers to it (i.e. business professionals AND occasional limousine renters), make sure you divide you plan and execute different marketing campaigns that correspond to each tier, and do not try to cover the entire gamut with one campaign. In a local market, specificity is key to efficient and effective use of marketing budget.
- When advertising locally, print advertising is an effective way to target your specific audience. For example, a local publication for wedding planners, like a wedding planner association news letter, is a highly targeted effective way to reach a specific audience.
- Local internet marketing is also a highly cost-effective and targeted tool for reaching a local audience. Include internet marketing efforts that target location-specific keywords (name of

your city, region, etc.). Include your business in online location-specific business directories (Google Places, Yahoo Local, Citysearch, Yelp, etc.)

- Attend local conferences, tradeshow, and events. Following our car service example, a local wedding planning conference or business networking conference is a great place to advertise your services, and local conferences are typically a lot less expensive than more general, larger conferences. Focus on conferences that are specific to your customers, NOT conferences and tradeshow that are specific to your industry and more likely to be attended by your competition.
- Possibly the most important thing you can do is ask for local referrals from your satisfied customers. Trust and communication exist among a local social or professional network, and leveraging this by asking your satisfied customers to tell other about you, “like” you on Facebook, etc. yields huge results.