

Don't believe for one second that many of these techniques are obvious to everyone — they're not. Only a very few know and understand them. As one of those few, you'll not only learn how to make your small business stay alive and thrive, but you'll learn how to dominate your marketplace. That's what you want isn't it?

Then dive right into "The Small Business Marketing Bible."

Sincerely,



David Frey

CEO, Marketing Best Practices, Inc.

Author, "The Small Business Marketing Bible"

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- Newspaper ads
- Posters
- Contests
- Card decks
- Seminars

- Television ads
- Signs
- Sweepstakes
- Door-to-door
- Teleclasses

- Radio ads
- Banners
- Trade shows
- Yellow Pages
- Articles

- Classified ads
- Newsletter
- Charity events
- Networking
- Infomercials

- Billboards
- Take out box
- Telemarketing
- Magazine ads
- Special events

- Sales letters
- Flyers
- Email
- Movie ads
- Ezine ads

- Postcards
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- Media releases
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- Brochures
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- Website

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Why is Your USP so Important

To be successful in small business you don't have to be the best, you just have to be unique. Identifying, developing, and incorporating your USP into everything you do is challenging. But the reward is worth every effort. It will differentiate you, distinguish you, and give you advantage over everyone in your marketplace.

“Me too” businesses rarely survive. They usually end up in price wars because they don't have anything unique about them to establish value in the minds of their prospects. They are left with only one weapon with which to compete — price. And unless you have a significant cost advantage over your other small business competitors, you will lose.

Make Your USP Crystal Clear

The more clearly you announce your USP, the more often customers will choose you over your competition. You must use your USP to dominate your local market. When a consumer thinks of your product or service, your name must be the first one that pops into her mind.

Your USP must create a real and perceived advantage in your prospect's mind. For example, Domino's made a very bold guarantee that if they didn't deliver your pizza within 30 minutes of ordering, it would be free of charge. Domino's put their USP into action.

Be Specific

How many small businesses do you hear saying, “The Best Selection in Town” or “Service with a Smile.” I have to tell you that these phrases are worn-out, tired renditions of a “me too” business. Be specific with your USP. When Domino's stated that your pizza would be, (1) fresh, (2) hot, and (3) delivered within 30 minutes, it was specific and measurable. “Buy it today and install it tonight” — that's specific and measurable.

How to Identify and Develop Your USP

You shouldn't rush or hurry the decision of your USP. You will spend thousands of dollars on advertising and promoting your USP. Once you've made your impression and then decide to change it, you begin to confuse your prospects, and it will cost you even more money to re-implement a different USP.

If your USP is a promise or guarantee, you must make sure that you can fulfill your USP promise. Domino's had a very bold USP. To get a pizza to anyone's house in Domino's marketplace within 30 minutes was sometimes a difficult feat to consistently accomplish. But the rewards were fantastic.

This is sometimes called “preemptive marketing.” You can preempt your competitors if you take a strong benefit, whether or not it’s unique, and put your stamp on it first. All others who come after you will just be strengthening an advantage that you have already placed in the minds of your prospects.

Live Up To Your USP

Be bold when developing your USP, but be careful to ensure that you can live up to your USP. Your USP should have promises, guarantees, policies and procedures, employee evaluations and other reinforcing processes to make each USP come alive.

Having a strong USP can make your business super successful; on the other hand, having a USP that you can’t live up to is suicide. I’m sure that Domino’s had to eat the cost of a lot of pizzas when they didn’t arrive within 30 minutes, but they developed a system that allowed them to deliver on their promise consistently.

Integrate Your USP into Everything You Do

Once you have put some careful thought to your USP and have developed it, you need to integrate it into everything you do. Your USP should be found somewhere in your headlines, body copy of ads, direct mail, and Yellow Pages. You should repeat it clearly and consistently in every one of your radio and television commercials.

You should include it in your sales presentation, on the walls of your business and even on your business card. You can’t overdo or wear out your USP, especially if it’s powerful.

The nation’s most successful furniture dealer is based here in Houston, Texas. You can’t turn on a radio or television without hearing the furniture store’s USP, “Saves You Money!” across the airwaves. It’s everywhere.

If you stopped someone on the street here in Houston and said two words, “Gallery Furniture” and asked them to finish the sentence, nine out of ten people would say, “Saves You Money!” That’s why it’s the most successful furniture store in the United States.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 Centers of Influence

Your Tier 1 Centers of Influence are people that are directly related in some way to your industry or profession. Tier 1 Centers of influence have a connection to your industry because they provide complimentary products and services. Referrals coming from your Tier 1 Centers of Influence can be very powerful.

For example, suppose you were a chiropractor. Tier 1 Centers of Influence for you would be orthopedic doctors, massage therapists, physical therapists, family physicians, local gym owners and managers, outpatient placement coordinators, etc. All these occupations deal with people who may be in need of chiropractics.

What is Your Goal with Tier 1 Referral Givers?

Your goal with Tier 1 referral givers is to be the first person on their minds when someone asks them about purchasing your product or service. With this in mind, you should sit down with your staff and come up with ideas about how to be the first person standing in line in the minds of your Tier 1 referrers.

Here are a few ideas to start you off:

1. Be their number one referrer: Make sure that you also have a referral mindset. Before you get you must give. Which means that in order to get lots of referrals from these people you must be giving them referrals.
2. Sponsor networking events or social gatherings for them. Make sure you try not to invite competitors. Have a good cross-section. You might hold several of these parties throughout the year so that you can invite several different potential referrers from the same industry.
3. Put each one of them on your newsletter list. Give them helpful information that they can use to make their sales go up. Give them marketing advice and information on new developments in your industry in which they should be aware.
4. Invite them to an all-expenses-paid marketing association luncheon that has a great speaker. Rent a limo to pick them up, serve them wine or fine drinks, and treat them like stars. (I know a mortgage broker that does this with real estate agents and makes a fortune in referrals.)
5. Purchase an information product about marketing in their business and give it to them as a free gift. They will thank you for your interest in wanting to help them grow their business.
6. If it's a big potential referrer, send them a Harry and David (www.harryanddavid.com) year-round gift that they will receive every month.

3. Clergy
4. Small business owners
5. Corporate business executives
6. Accountants
7. Financial planners
8. Lawyers
9. Pest control people, and so on.

Your Tier 2 Centers of Influence are people that may have no idea what it is that you do. Take the time to clearly explain to them not only what it is you do, but the importance of referrals for your business.

Go one step farther by inviting them to after-hours socials. Tell them stories about some results that your customers have experienced as a result of your product or service. Get them excited about what you do. Get to know what they do by asking them questions. Now each of you can get excited when you give valuable referrals, which in turn will be transferred to the new prospect.

The Power of Cross-Promotions

Perhaps the single most powerful referral program is a cross-promotion using endorsements from other well-respected people. It's a simple idea. An associate sends an endorsement letter about you and your product or service to her customer list and you, in turn, do the same to your customer list. It's a win-win.

The reason endorsement letters are so powerful is because people will buy from people they know and respect. How many times have you asked a personal friend, "Do you know a good place to buy _____?" Or "Do you know a good _____ that I can go to see about getting _____ done?" You trust their opinion so you feel comfortable buying from businesses recommended by them.

You can make it a one-way cross-promotion in which you have someone send out a letter to their customer list and you give them a referral fee for those people who buy your service. Or you can make it a two-way cross-promotion, in which each of you sends letters to your own customers about the other's products and services.

These are some examples of complimentary product or service businesses that can take advantage of this powerful strategy:

- Pizza place and video rental store
- Accountant and financial planner
- Toy store and fast food restaurant
- Dry cleaner and clothing store
- Paint store and tile business
- Jewelry store and wedding supply

Tapping Into Your Most Valuable Small Business Asset...Your Current Customers

Not long ago I was speaking with a client in the spa and pool industry who expressed concern that his sales had grown stagnant. He mentioned that he was still actively advertising and working his lead generation process but his new customers had slowed to a trickle.

I asked him, “As a percentage of your marketing efforts, how much is devoted to new customer acquisition and how much is devoted to current customer sales?”

He glanced at me with a look of confusion and said, “What do you mean current customer sales?” He continued, “Once we sell a spa to a customer, that’s it. They’re not going to come back and buy another spa a week later. A lot of our customers come in to buy chemicals and some accessories, but that’s it. All of our efforts are focused on finding people who want to buy a new spa or pool.”

There’s Gold in Your Customer Base Waiting to be Mined

Unfortunately, my client didn’t understand the value of his customer base. There is gold in your customer base waiting to be mined. You see, many retailers focus on the first sale or the “front end” sale and spend a disproportionate amount of time looking for new customers when the real goldmine lies in the “back end” sales, or continuing stream of sales.

You’ve probably spent a lot of money acquiring your customers. Not only do you miss out on lost revenue when you ignore them, but you also flush your return on investment from acquiring your customers right down the tube.

If you have convinced a person to do business with you, it means that they have already given you a vote of confidence. If you’ve provided good service and met (or exceeded) their expectations, it’s very likely that they would be willing to give you a second vote of confidence or third or fourth. If you’re good you may even get their lifetime vote of confidence.

To Get to the Pot of Gold, You Have to Know Where to Mine

You must be able to contact your customers in order to market to them. That's why one of the first pieces of advice I give to my clients is to capture your customer's contact information at the point of sale. This process is done automatically in some businesses, but in others you must ask for your customer's contact information.

If you have ever purchased an item at Radio Shack you know that the clerk always asks for your name, address, and phone number. They don't even give you a reason, they just ask for it. They just assume you will give it to them, and you know what? 98% of Radio Shack customers do give it, without any question. The process is so automatic that you feel that giving your contact information is just part of the purchasing process.

Every small business in America should be doing the same thing as Radio Shack. But to go one step further, you should be capturing your customer's email address as well (assuming they have one). Capturing your customer's email address is the **"holy grail"** of marketing because you can market to your customer again and again at no cost.

If your customer is reluctant to give you their email address, give them a bribe, such as a coupon for their next visit or something else of value. The effort to obtain your customer's email address will be re-paid many times over.

Focus On Your Best Customers

Most businesses lose between 10 and 20 percent of their customers each year. Retailers lose even higher percentages. Depending on your business, a large majority of your customers lie dormant, having only transacted business with you once or twice. Your remaining customers are those that are loyal to you and from whom your profits can be significant.

Gordon Bethune, CEO of Continental, that they win back their customers by calling them and personally asking for forgiveness and for a second chance.

Greg Brenneman, who later became Continental's Chief Operating Officer, and Gordon Bethune both got on the phones with their executive staff and started to call their best inactive customers one-by-one. It worked like gangbusters. Inactive customers who were dissatisfied with Continental were impressed by the personal phone call and came back in droves. Since then its stock has risen 1,700%.

Be a Full-Service Provider Without All the Hassle

Let's go back to my client in the spa and pool industry who mentioned that he didn't know what more to sell his customer because they had just purchased a spa, a one-time item purchase. He did have a valid point. He personally couldn't sell his customer much more than chemicals and accessories, BUT, he could be a full-service provider by offering complimentary products and services in which his customer might be interested.

How? I advised my client to meet with the owners of other businesses that provide complimentary products and services that his customer might be interested in and strike up a commission or referral deal. This way he could still benefit economically from his relationships with his customers and continue to provide his customers other products and services.

To maximize this strategy you must consider asking your customers what they are lacking and then find out how to solve it. As the sayings go...

Find a need and fill it. Find a hurt and heal it. Find an itch and scratch it.

Virtually every successful small businessperson you ask will tell you that finding and meeting unmet wants is the name of the game when it comes to winning customers. The better you do this, the more customers you'll win.

Conclusion

Don't make one of the biggest mistakes in the book by ignoring your customers. You paid a lot to get them. You'll pay a lot if you offend them. Why not make a lot by delighting them?

To Our Valued Customer

Sometimes we get so busy that we forget to let you our customers like you know how much we appreciate your business. So incase we haven't told you lately...**THANK YOU!**

It's customers like you who have made us who we are - we hope our appreciation shows in the way we do business. We work hard to be the most courteous and helpful men's wear service you'll ever find. We also find the absolute best values for you every day.

For instance, the suit you just purchased is of high quality and to keep it looking sharp we know you'll need great cleaning. So we found the best garment cleaning service in the area and purchased you a gift certificate worth \$18 worth of cleaning.

"This Certificate Entitles You to \$18 in FREE Cleaning from (Name of Cleaner)"

It's our gift to you with no catches or gimmicks. It's just our way of saying thanks. Use this certificate and let us know how you like it. Again, *Thank You* for your loyalty.

Protect Your Fine Garments

FREE Dry Cleaning and Laundry

This gift certificate entitles the holder to each of the following services... one FREE service per visit please.

- ☐ Free Dry Cleaning, Reg. Suit or Dress
- ☐ Free Dry Cleaning, Reg. Blazer or Sweater
- ☐ Free Dry Cleaning, Reg. Slacks or Skirt
- ☐ Free Dry Cleaning, Reg. 3 Reg. Shirts

One Gift Certificate Per Household

Example of Joint Venture Between a Men's Wear Store and a Dry Cleaner

Handling Potential Objections

Objection #1 — "I don't feel comfortable having you interface with my customers. I don't like having someone else control the relationship with my customers."

Response — "That's fine. As a matter of fact, it would be better if you interfaced directly with your customers on our behalf. We are more than willing to do all the legwork, which will take the burden off you. We can have a JV meeting periodically to review how everything's going and to make sure that you're comfortable with the process."

Objection #2 — "How can I be assured that I will get paid my share of the revenues?"

Response — "No problem. You can control all the money. You can pay me periodically. I trust that you'll handle the proceeds from our JV fairly and properly. If you would like we could set up an independent account and a third-party bank with escrow instructions. This way there's no risk for either of us."

Note: Be completely honest, open, and trusting. Your ultimate goal is to establish an ongoing synergistic relationship with your partner. This will only happen with a win-win relationship based on honesty and trust.

Objection #3 — "How do I know your proposal is going to make me money?"

Response — “We’ll start off the project with a limited pilot test with a small group of your customers. After the results come in we can review our revenue targets and feedback from your customers. If you are comfortable with the results we’ll move forward.”

Note: When negotiating your joint venture deal always try to get an agreement to extend your relationship. For instance, get agreement at the start that if the test goes well, the joint venture will last for the next 12 months. You don’t want your partner company stealing your good idea and playing you against your competitors. (Yes, unfortunately there are some unscrupulous business owners out there that would do this.)

Take These Steps to Get Your Joint Venture Going

Step 1 — Understand your numbers. You’ll need these to demonstrate how much money your partner could make. For instance, if you’re a health club owner, know what your response rate is for a typical direct mail campaign and the dollar value of each new customer.

Step 2 — Make a list of potential complimentary or related products and services. Don’t leave out products or services that aren’t necessarily related in which your customer might still be interested.

Step 3 — Make a list of the businesses that sell those products and services. Specifically note those companies in which you know the owner or have contacts. Then send a letter to those people and propose a meeting to explain your strategy further. Always start by introducing yourself and asking if they would be interested in making money (use a specific amount) with little to no effort. Make a follow-up phone call to set up the appointment.

Step 4 — Present a compelling fact-based case for a joint venture. You might even mention that you have a call in to one (or two) of their competitors to present the potential venture to them as well.

Step 5 — Deliver on what you promise with integrity, honesty, ethics and enthusiasm.

Potential Joint Ventures Are All Around You — Take Your Blinders Off!

As a small business owner, you should always be thinking about establishing joint ventures, even if it’s just a lead generation joint venture. A chiropractor friend of mine has “drop boxes” in various business locations offering a free back massage and screening, in addition to a drawing to win a free service or product offered by the business hosting the drop box.

“How Would You Do Things Differently If... “

Let's suppose for a moment that you truly did internalize this critical principle. Suppose that you sincerely believed that your most important function was the marketing of your products and services. What would you do differently tomorrow morning?

- Would the contents of your daily to-do list change?
- Would you allocate and prioritize your time differently?
- Would you consider changing your role in the organization?
- Would you change the criteria and process with which you screen new employees?
- Would your personal training agenda and employee training change?

I would suggest that if you really believed deep down that your primary business objective (and number one goal) is to **market** your products and services, your to-do list, the way you allocate your time, your role in your company, the hiring process, and your personal and employee training would be radically different than it is today.

High Value Activities

Now that you know what your primary business objective should be, what are you going to do about it?

In my prior life as a big-time corporate consultant, I sometimes felt uncomfortable about how much my company billed my clients for my time. I often asked myself, “Am I adding value right now, equal to the price my client is paying?” It helped me to prioritize my activities.

I suggest that you make a habit of asking yourself that same question every day. Allow me to list a few activities that I (and you should) consider “high value.”

- Creating (or developing) something unique in your product or service.
- Attending direct response marketing conferences / workshops / bootcamps.
- Meeting with your mastermind-marketing group.
- Building your personal marketing swipe file.
- Finding low-cost targeted advertising opportunities.
- Studying the marketing strategies of your competitors and other businesses outside of your industry.
- Networking with other owners and representatives of businesses that target your same market.
- Testing your advertising and marketing to improve your current response rates.
- Writing articles for trade journals, local newspapers, magazines, industry newsletters, etc.
- Writing sales letters and managing your direct mail marketing campaigns.
- Training employees on current offers and how to present them to customers.

Another associate of mine runs a small business marketing firm (much like mine) and his unique selling proposition is, "I GUARANTEE that with my help you'll double your business revenues and profits within 12 months or my services are free."

What I'm suggesting is that you make your guarantee a focal point in your marketing efforts. Your opportunity lies in how aggressively you're willing to tell the world about your guarantee. To the extent that you do, you'll enjoy a competitive advantage over all other companies in your industry. Your business courage will pay you tremendous long-term dividends.

Magic Words to Create Powerful Guarantees

How you word your guarantee can make all the difference in the world. Power words and phrases significantly boost your sales and response rates. Here are few strong words and phrase that will bring some zing to your guarantee:

- Take-It-To-The-Bank
- Better-Than-Risk-Free
- You Can't Lose
- Unconditional, Money-Back Guarantee
- Your Money Back, No Questions Asked
- I Personally Guarantee
- No Way That You Can Lose
- 30-Day Free Examination
- No-Questions, No-Quibbles, Money-Back Guarantee
- Iron-Clad Money-Back Guarantee
- 100% On-The-Spot Full Refund
- My 110% "Call me Crazy" GUARANTEE!
- Absolutely No Risk To You!
- 100%, No-Hassle Refund!
- My 110%, No-Fuss, No-Questions, "Take-It-or-Leave-It" PROMISE!
- No Pussyfooting Around And Get Every Single Penny Back GUARANTEE!

There's no better place to find some of the most powerful copy written guarantees than on the Internet. Here's a few that I think are heads and shoulders above the rest. Most are for information products so keep that in mind. As you read these notice that each guarantee has its own headlines. Your headline is 80% of your guarantee.

Sample Guarantee # 1 – Yanik Silver – Instant Sales Letters

100% Better-Than-Risk-Free-Take-it-To-The-Bank Guarantee:

I personally guarantee that if you make an honest effort to try just a few of these proven sales letters in your business, you'll produce at least 10 times your investment in profits within the next 60 days. That's right, 10 times extra profits you wouldn't have made if you didn't send out these sales letters. You've got 2 full months to prove to yourself these templates really do work. But if you aren't 100% satisfied, let me know and I'll issue you an immediate, no-hassle refund right on the spot. Plus, the free bonus gifts are yours to keep regardless, just for your trouble.

Sample Guarantee # 2 – Kirt Christensen – Buying Web Businesses

Here's My 125%, Walk Away, "No Hard Feelings," No Fess. Full Money Back Guarantee!

I'm so convinced that you'll be absolutely delighted with your membership that I'm prepared to give you an iron-clad, 30-day, "Take-It-or-Leave-It," totally outrageous GUARANTEE:

The "impossible-to-turn-it-down" guarantee is simple:

Try my Buying Web Business Power Mentoring System out for a full month, read through the entire site, download all of the bonuses, post questions on the private discussion board to your heart's content and use the step-by-step checklists.

If you don't pick up at least one good idea that can help you get every penny back in less than 30 days, simply cancel and owe us nothing. In other words, if you're not totally delighted with the techniques you've learned, drop me a line...

I'll refund your \$29, right there, on the spot!

Simply put, I'll gladly issue you a refund and we'll part as friends, no harm done. What could be fairer than that?

(Of course, on top of my "No Hard Feelings," 30-day money back guarantee, you can simply cancel your membership at any time. Billing will stop from that point on. No problem!)

If you can't find a list of your target market then you'll have to do lead generation to build your list. This process can be expensive and time consuming but once you have the list, its yours to keep (rather than renting lists).

Lead generation usually starts with placing advertisements in other media (i.e. newspapers, Internet, magazines, newsletters etc.) that target the interests of your niche. The advertisements should entice readers to call up and ask for something free (or very low cost). This allows you to get their contact information and build your list.

For example, if you were a sauna dealer targeting people with heart disease (saunas are known to improve blood flow to the heart) sufferers you might write up a news article about recent studies that have found that saunas to help reduce the risk of heart disease. At the end of the article you might offer a free report about how saunas improve your health that the reader can get by calling a phone number. Below is an example of what that ad might look like.

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Again, there are a number of ways to communicate with your niche. The key is to do it in a way that is fast, inexpensive, and effective.

Step Seven – Don't Stop at One Niche!

Once you have your niche marketing process down don't stop at one niche. Apply what you have learned from dominating one niche to other niches. The marginal cost of developing the processes and materials for another niche is negligible.

All you have to do is tweak your product for other niches. Then give your product or service away (or for a huge discount) in exchange for testimonials. Then start tweaking your marketing materials for your new niche.

I know of a person who created a book with tips and techniques for saving on taxes. He sold it for around \$50. He then tweaked it slightly for real estate agents and sold the book to that industry for \$150. He did this again and again to dozens of small business industries for huge profits.

Just think of the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series. That has got to be the ultimate "cross-niched" product. There's a "Chicken Soup for the _____ Soul" for just about everything and everybody. Ingenious!

There is a whole wide world of niches out there to dominate. If you just think of the different occupations that are part of your overall target market, your list may be very long. Be a niche hammer and dominate your market place.

Each of these 12 steps add to reader's emotions while calming their fears.

Motivation Is An Emotional Thing

It's important to remember that people are motivated to buy based on their emotions, and that they justify their purchase based on logic only after the sale. This means that each step in the sales letter process must build on the reader's emotions to a point where they are motivated to take action.

That being true, there are only two things that truly motivate people — the promise of gain and the fear of loss. Of the two, the fear of loss is the stronger motivator.

Think about it.

Would you rather buy a \$50 course on “How to Improve Your Marriage” or on “How to Stop Your Divorce or Lover's Rejection?” I have empirical data that proves that the second title outsells the first 5 to 1. Why? Because it addresses the fear of loss.

Underlying the promise of gain and the fear of loss are seven “universal motivations” to which everyone responds. Whatever product or service you are selling, you need to position it so that its benefits provide one or more of these universal motivations:

1. To be wealthy
2. To be good looking
3. To be healthy
4. To be popular
5. To have security
6. To achieve inner peace
7. To have free time
8. To have fun

Ultimate motivations are what people “really” want. Your product or service is just a vehicle to providing these benefits, so make sure your sales letter focuses on these motivational factors.

The 12-Step Foolproof Sales Letter System

Now that we know what impedes a person to buy and what motivates a person to action, let's review the 12 elements of a winning sales letter.

1. Get Attention

Assuming the reader has opened your envelope, the next step is to get their attention. The opening headline is the first thing that your reader will look at. If it doesn't catch their attention you can kiss your letter goodbye. People have a very short attention span and

For example, a hot tub not only soothes and relaxes your muscles but it also gives you an opportunity to talk to your spouse without interruptions. The hidden benefit is greater communication with your spouse — and ultimately a better marriage!

Bullet point each benefit to make it easier to read. Think about every possible benefit your reader may derive from your product or service. In many cases, people will buy a product or service based on only one of the benefits you list.

6. Give Social Proof

After you've presented all your benefits the reader will again begin to doubt you, even though they secretly want all your claimed benefits to be true. To build your credibility and believability present your reader with testimonials from satisfied customers.

Testimonials are powerful selling tools that prove your claims to be true. To make your testimonial even more powerful, include pictures of your customers with their names and addresses (at least the city and state).

You might even ask if you can use your testimonial customers' phone numbers. Most readers won't call but it is a powerful statement to include complete contact information. It demonstrates that you are real and so are the testimonials.

7. Make Your Offer

Your offer is the most important part of your sales letter. A great offer can overcome mediocre copy, but great copy cannot overcome a mediocre offer. Your offer should be irresistible. You want your reader to say to themselves, "I'd be stupid not to take advantage of this deal."

Your offer can come in many different formats. The best offers are usually an attractive combination of price, terms, and free gifts. For example, if you were selling a car your offer might be a discounted retail price, low interest rate, and a free year of gas.

Hint: When developing your offer you should always try to raise the value of your offer by adding on products or services, rather than by lowering your price. Include vivid explanations of the benefits of the additional products or services you are offering in order to raise the perceived value of your offer.

8. Give a Guarantee

To make your offer even more irresistible you need to take all the risk out of the purchase. Remember, that people have a built-in fear that they are going to get ripped off. How many times have you purchased a product and got stuck with it because the merchant wouldn't give your money back?

- They don't feel that the perceived value outweighs your asking price
- They are just plain lazy

To motivate people to take action they usually need an extra incentive. Remember when I said that people are more motivated to act by the fear of loss rather than gain? That's exactly what you are doing when you inject scarcity into your letter.

When people think there is a scarce supply of something they need they usually rush to get some of it. You can create a feeling of scarcity by telling your reader that either the quantity is in limited supply or that your offer is valid for only a limited time period.

Your offer could sound something like this:

"If you purchase by (future date) you will get the entire set of free bonuses"

Or

"Our supply is limited to only 50 (product or service) and will be sent to you on a 'first come, first served' basis. After they are gone there won't be any more available."

Or

"This offer is only good until (future date) after which the (product or service) will return to its original price."

One word of caution: If you make an offer you need to live up to it. If you go back on your word after the deadline date you will begin to erode the trust and confidence your customers have come to expect from you.

10. Call to action

Do not assume that your reader knows what to do to receive the benefits from your offer. You must spell out how to make the order in a very clear and concise language. Whether its picking up the phone and making the call, filling out an order form, faxing the order form to your office etc.... you must tell them exactly how to order from you.

Your call to action must be "action-oriented." You can do this using phrases like 'Pick Up the Phone and Call Now!' or "Tear Off the Order Form and Send It In Today!" or "Come to Our Store by Friday and ...". Be explicit and succinct in your instructions.

Plant your call to action throughout your letter. If you are asking the reader to call your free information line then perhaps some of the testimonials might say, "When I called their free information line". Or in your offer you might say, "When you call our free information line..." Then when you give the call to action at the end of the letter, people won't be surprised or confused. It will be consistent with what you said all throughout your letter.

Again, following up from the last example you could say, “Our meeting would only last for 15 to 20 minutes. I have a time slot open on Wednesday at 3:45 pm or Thursday morning at 11:15 am. Which is better for you?”

Use Benefit-Oriented After-Hours Voicemail

There’s no better time to market to somebody then when they are waiting to speak to you. Instead of telling the person waiting on the phone about how great you are, help them to solve their problems. Here is a typical message that I hear often: “Thanks for calling ABC Pools. Our store hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Please call back during our normal business hours. Thank you.” Click.

1. Offer a Free Report — Consider putting a recording similar to this on your message system:

“Thanks for calling ABC Pools, with the only pool that provides a maintenance-free sparkling pool water system. If you’ve reached this message we are probably gone for the day. We apologize and want you to know that you are important to us. Feel free to call our 24 hour free recorded message at xxx-xxx-xxxx to hear “The Six Secrets to Building Your Own Pool.” Leave your name and number at the sound of the tone and we’ll call you as soon as we possibly can. If you don’t leave your name and number we won’t be able to enter you into our drawing for a free trip to Las Vegas. Thanks again for calling ABC Pools.”

2. Send a Postcard — Another idea is to talk to your phone company about hooking up a caller ID so that you can get their phone number with a reverse phone number look up that can be found on the Web.

If you get their address in this manner, immediately send a postcard out to them thanking them for their inquiry and inviting them to come in or receive a free report. If they are calling you and they are a prospect, it means that they are in the market and will probably make a decision soon, so the postcard needs to go out quickly.

Conclusion

Your telephone can be a powerful marketing tool if it is used correctly. With some know-how training you’ll be able to see results immediately. A great website for learning more about how to use your phone to make profits is www.BusinessByPhone.com owned by Art Sobczak, an author and expert in telephone marketing.

Presenting Your Price

Perhaps the only thing more important than setting the right price is how you present it. The key to presenting your price is to compare it with something that the consumer perceives as relatively huge.

For instance, the following techniques uses the compare / contrast method to give the perception that your price is not only fair, but a great deal.

Technique # 1 — Volume Method

Imagine you are selling a course on how to stop smoking. Using this method your copy would read something like this: "...you'd have to have 12 months of personal smoker's rehab counseling to get the same amount of coaching that you'll find in this course."

Suppose you are selling taxation consulting you could say "...in just one session you'll learn how to save more in taxes than you paid last year to the I.R.S." Notice how what you are giving them is compared to a much larger quantity, which has the effect of making your price seem like a great deal.

Technique # 2 — Monthly Installment Method

Offer to have your customer pay low monthly installments, rather than one hefty price, then just advertise the monthly installment price. This gives the perception of a low price. Recently I sold a mobile home and noticed that people didn't really care about the price of the home; they were more concerned about the amount of the monthly payments.

Technique # 3 — Individual Value Comparison

This method takes each individual component of the offer, places a value on it, and then adds it all up for a total and then compares it to the asking price.

For instance, if you were in the hotel business you might say this, "...your luggage carried to your shuttle van (value — \$15), a swift shuttle ride directly to your hotel (value \$35), your personal assistant to help you carry up your baggage and get settled in (value \$10), premium movie channels for your viewing pleasure (\$12), a relaxing overnight stay in your personal suite (value \$189), and a hearty breakfast in the morning (\$15) for a total value of over \$260...yours for only a small investment of \$99. You save over \$160!

Technique # 4 — Pain Avoidance Method

As a consultant I often try to put a price tag on the problem to give my client a realistic picture of what it is costing her to continue to do nothing. Then I compare it to my relatively small fee for helping to rid her of that problem.

For instance, the conversation might go like this...

2. Increase your minimum order sizes so that customers will have to meet a higher minimum threshold to get their discounts.
3. Increase your delivery charge and start charging for any special services related to delivery.
4. Start invoicing for repairs on serviced equipment.
5. Bill your customer for any engineering and installation services that you previously included in the purchase price.
6. Raise your prices for overtime on rushed orders.
7. Start aggressively collecting on overdue accounts from the past several months.
8. Shift your sales mix to higher margin products and service and start phasing out the lower margin items.
9. Begin to write stiff penalty clauses into all your contracts.
10. Decrease the physical characteristics of the product or remove services that you are now providing and continue to charge the same prices.

Never Compete On Price

Let me first say this, and if you get nothing else from this chapter remember this “Never compete on price!” Never, never, never! It’s a losing proposition for you and for your competitors. OK, there’s always an exception. If you have a substantial cost advantage that is virtually impossible to duplicate then there might be a case for competing on a lower price.

What usually ends up happening is after you lower your price, your competitor is forced to lower their price a little more, then you have to match the lower price and down it goes. Everybody loses (except for the customer). Why compete on price when there are so many avenues for differentiating your product or service? It doesn’t make sense. Or should I say, cents...

Conclusion

Pricing is a key factor in marketing and selling your product or service. Whatever price you choose, make sure that you have an end objective in mind and that your pricing strategy supports your end objective.

Don’t believe the myths that are swirling around about pricing. In the end, price is simply a perception of value. Build your value and charge higher prices. Make sure that you do some testing on your price points or you might be missing out on a lot of profits.

How you present your price can be just as important as the price you choose. Always make a comparison to something large that your customer can understand. Advertise your price only if it’s very low or you can build value into the advertisement.

Although some price gimmicks may seem juvenile and down right dumb, never overestimate the intelligence of the public.

Principle # 1 — Each of the three packages offered was a solution to a customer's problem. Don't offer a packaged product or service unless it offers a solution to a problem. Why? Because people only buy things that solve problems they are experiencing.

Principle # 2 — Each offer actually had three unique offers that built off the lower-priced package. Giving the consumer choices is what packaging and bundling is all about. Providing options with increasing value is what motivates consumers to "up-sell" themselves by choosing the more expensive option.

Principle # 3 — The names of the different packages denoted increasing value: silver, gold, platinum or starter, super, ultimate. Notice that each word has increasing value. Also notice that the name of the lowest package denoted value. That's why we started with silver instead of bronze. It says that even the lowest option is valuable.

Principle # 4 — The additional products or services that are added on to the basic package have a low cost to you. The "add-ons" need to be cost effective because the incremental price you are charging needs to provide significant margin to the package.

Principle # 5 — I threw the Life cereal example in for two reasons. One, because it's my favorite cereal and two, because I wanted to show you that you don't have to have a bunch of different products to create a package. You can just add more of the same product to the package.

In fact, just yesterday I purchased two units of potato salad. A single unit of potato salad costs \$2.00 and the double package costs \$3.00. I bought the \$3.00 package, ate the first unit, and took the second one home.

Look Around for Packaging Options

Yes, you do have packaging options in your business. You just need to open your eyes to find them. In some way, shape, or form you can create unique packages of your product or service that will solve one or more of your customer's problems.

Idea # 3 — Always include a testimonial in your advertising. You'll never see an ad for a weight loss product without a testimonial. Why? Because those advertisers know that people are skeptical of all ads (not just weight loss ads) and testimonials overcome skepticism more than any other marketing tool.

Idea # 4 — In every direct mail piece you send, include a one or two page full of testimonials. This gives automatic credence to whatever offer you are sending. You can make the testimonials a part of the sales letter but from my experience, sending loose leaf pages of testimonials make a persuasive statement.

Idea # 5 — Include customer testimonials on an audiotape. It's one thing to read a testimonial but another to hear a real live person. You can even include the pictures and bios of those people on the tape in your mailer. I know of one marketer who sells information products who includes an audiocassette tape with his sales letter. All the audio tape contains is a recording of customers praising his product. It's powerful.

Idea # 6 — Do joint endorsed mailings. If you have an associate that has customers who might be good prospects for what you sell, ask if he would like to participate in a joint endorsed mailing in which your associate would send a letter to his customers endorsing (giving a testimonial) you and your products and services. In return you send a letter to your customers endorsing your associate's products and services. It's a win-win.

Idea # 7 — Do an endorsed referral letter promotion. This tactic is similar to Idea # 6 but the promotion is done with your customers. Hold a contest of some sort and award prizes (incentives) to those customers who send in the names and addresses of three friends who they know would benefit from your products or services. Then send each of the three friends a letter with the testimonial of the person who referred them. This could give your referral program a jolt.

Start a “Testimonial Drive” Today

Chances are, you have not been diligent in asking for customer testimonials. I would urge you to make a commitment today to start asking for testimonials from 100% of your customers. You can't have enough customer testimonials.

Make a plan today to begin a “Customer Testimonial Drive” and set a goal to obtain 100 customer testimonials within the next three months. Put a thermometer on the wall if you have to, but start today. Draft your testimonial request letter and send it out this week. Then start following up on your requests by phone next week.

Conclusion

Testimonials are a powerful tool in helping you to break down your prospects' skepticism and fear. When customers give you a testimonials, they work to solidify your relationship with them because they have “gone public” with their statement of support for your business.

The Key To Guaranteed Repeat Sales

There is no more customer loyalty! Let's face it, people go where they get the best deal. By that I don't mean the cheapest prices, but the best value for their money. Just because your customer purchased from you once, don't be fooled into thinking that they will buy from you a second time. Even though your customer may have had a "wow" experience with you or your company, they are likely to buy the next time from someone who provides a product as good as yours but that costs a little less or is delivered a little faster.

Since the 70's there has been an explosion in consumer choices. For example, in the 70's there were only four types of milk. Today there are over 20. In the 70's there was only one type of contact lens. Today there are over 40 unique styles. Competition has also become fiercer with the rise in consumer choices. It's hard to find a market (large or small) that doesn't already have multiple competitors battling for their piece of the pie.

Three Types of Customer Relationships

So how do you keep your customers coming back time and again?

To answer this important question you need to take a moment and think about what would keep a customer coming back to a business. Three instances come to mind:

1. The Customer and the Business Have a Positive Relationship

In this instance, the customer has formed a positive relationship with either a person who works for the business or with the business itself. Perhaps they had a great experience and they now have an emotional bond with the business. Unfortunately, unless the emotional bond is nurtured, it dies a fast death — and quite frankly, there are extremely few businesses that nurture their relationships with their customers.

2. The Customer Has Incentive to Continue the Business Relationship

People are human and because of that we are naturally greedy. The principle of greediness is what makes capitalism successful. Companies who reward (bribe) their customers with coupons, points, credits, and bonuses create an incentive-based relationship that crumbles once the incentive is taken away.

3. The Customer "Has" to Continue the Relationship Because the Cost to Change is Too High

This is an instance in which the business has tied its operations into the customer's life or business so closely, that to move to another product or service provider would cause damage emotionally, socially, operationally, or financially. An example of this type of relationship would be a person who is emotionally dependent on his therapist (emotional)

Questions to Ask Yourself to Jumpstart Your Creative Thinking

The following are questions that you can ask yourself in each of the four areas of Integrated Relationships that will help give you ideas about what you can do to create an Integrated Relationship with your customer.

Operational

1. Do you have a technology that you can deploy into your customer's business?
2. Can you take over or manage a portion of your customer's business operations?
3. Can you house or manage your customer's data or assets at your place of business?

Social

1. Can you get your customer to be a public poster child (i.e. provide a public testimonial) for your business?

Hint: An easy way to do this is by writing articles and submitting them to trade publications about how your customer solved their business problem with your product or service.

2. Can you create a brand so "cool" or popular that to not use it would be embarrassing?
3. Can you present an award to your biggest customer(s) (or target prospect) and announce it to the industry?

Financial

1. Can you offer a program that requires a large upfront investment that delivers products or services over time?
2. Can you offer your significant customers an opportunity to financially invest in your business?
3. Can you lock your customer into a long-term contract with penalties attached for breaking the relationship?

Emotional

1. Can you hire influential people in your industry (i.e. recognized industry experts, high-level executives in big companies, popular service professions) that already have very close relationships with target customers?

That's it! That's all there is to it. After the ads are developed and you know which ones pull best and you've developed your follow-up marketing materials you can hand the system over to your lowest level assistant for them to manage.

The Magic Is In the Follow-Up

In the system that I have just presented to you, generating leads is the easy part. Converting the leads to cash-paying customers is the tricky part.

You must follow up immediately, persistently, consistently, and persuasively. DON'T set up and kick off your lead generation system without first putting some real thought into your follow-up marketing system.

Use telemarketing, postcards, sales letters, email, and voice broadcasting couple with powerful, juicy, irresistible offers in order to persuade your prospect to become your customer.

The System Can Be Used With Any Advertising Medium

Let me clarify a common misperception that many people have. You can use any type of marketing medium to generate leads — radio, cable TV, voice broadcasting, signs, the Internet, etc.

In fact, one of the best lead generating efforts using The System that I have every implemented was for a company that participated in a lot of trade shows.

We created a large sign that said "FREE SPECIAL REPORT! Hot Tub and Pool Buying Secrets Revealed." We posted the sign in the booth and had a sign-up sheet for people to leave their name and address, which we would use to send them the report.



ASK ME FOR OUR FREE REPORT NOW!

**HOT TUB AND POOL BUYING
SECRETS REVEALED!**

DON'T BUY BEFORE READING THIS REPORT

TRADE SHOW BOOTH BANNER

The booth was half the size of its competitors. We ended up getting three to four times the amount of leads as the "big guys" and converting 20% of those leads!

How to Radically Reduce Refunds and Returns

There are few things worse for a small business owner than to watch your product come back after the sale with a request for a refund. Refunds and returns are a waste of your money, time, and effort.

If you're like most small business owners, only a very small percentage of your target market ever steps into your place of business, and even fewer people open up their wallets to buy your product or service. Imagine how much of an investment in your resources you lose when your customer asks for a return and refund.

Why Do People Return Products and Ask for Refunds?

To solve the problem of refunds and returns you need to start at the root of the problem. First you have to ask yourself why people return products and ask for refunds. After all, when you sell a product or service, that customer represents someone who put their trust in you and believed that your product or service would solve a problem that they had.

Before I tell the number one reason people return things, first let me tell you why they do not. Not because your product was faulty or because it arrived broken. Although these problems do exist, they're not the biggest reason why people return purchases.

People return things because of something called "Buyer's Remorse." Buyer's remorse takes place after a purchase — the higher the price tag, the bigger the remorse.

People Have a Natural Tendency to Be Disappointed

People have a built in skepticism and a natural tendency to automatically be disappointed about things. I know that sounds strange, but it's true. If you don't believe me, set aside one day and count how many times you complain versus the number of times you sing praises about somebody or something.

You'll quickly find that your complaints outnumber your praises 10:1. If you've ever read the book, The One Minute Manager, by Kenneth Blanchard, you'll know that managers have a natural tendency to manage by exception — they will point out people's faults before they ever "catch" anybody doing something correct.

Consumers are the same way. After they purchase a product, they will usually feel slighted in one way or another. And it only gets worse with the size of the purchase.

The After-Sale Comparison Shop

This could be a special report on video or audiotape. It could be something that you bought as an overstock item or at a clearance sale.

My brother sells hot tubs and they send a basket of cookies shaped like a hot tub to their customer after each sale. If you sell a high ticket item, go to my favorite gift store, www.harryanddavid.com and give your customer a year round gift basket.

Strategy # 5 — Give them a Phone Call

Depending on the size of your business you might want to give your customer a phone call just to say thank you. Last year I was having severe lower back pain. I dragged myself to the chiropractor's office to get worked on.

He gave me some electrolysis stimulation and a great lower back massage with deep heating rub. I felt a lot better walking out than I did walking in.

That night I was shocked to get a phone call from the doctor. He was following up to make sure I was feeling a little better and to give me a few tips to sleep better. Wow. I became a big fan and have been seeing him off and on ever since.

Strategy # 6 — Ask for their Testimonial

A couple of years after my wife and I were married our old, worn out Toyota Tercel "gave up the ghost." We decided to go down to a dealership and buy a relatively new Honda Civic.

After we had signed the papers and before we had gotten out of the dealership, the finance person asked us to fill out a survey, which asked how satisfied we were and what we liked most about our experience.

Before we knew it, we had written a raving testimonial. We were giddy and excited about the thought of owning our "almost new" Honda Civic.

Not a week later the dealership sent us a thank you letter and included our glowing testimonial. We felt a warm fuzzy inside seeing our testimonial in writing. Even if we had a problem later on we probably wouldn't have made a stink about it. We would have been too embarrassed. After all, how smart could a person be if they publicly raved about the dealership and their experience, and then turned around and complained?

Once consumers make a public statement supporting you and your product or service, they will go to extraordinary lengths to maintain that posture. The chance of them returning a product or asking for a refund decreases dramatically.

Mole”, “Blind Date (my favorite)”, and “Elimi-Date” are dominating the television ratings. Why? Because people like to look at other people.

Including stories of real people will magnetize your copy. For instance, who can resist the headline, “An Open Letter from A Once-Flat-Broke Nebraska Housewife Who “Stumbled Across” A Business That Made Her Rich, One That You Can Start Too For As Little As \$15.00.” This headline almost forces you to continue reading. By the way, this headline was written by Dan Kennedy and has continued to appear in nearly all the home business magazines for several years.

Suggestion # 2 — Use Case Studies

Case studies are important in several ways. First, they take advantage of the voyeur effect explained in the previous suggestion. Second, they demonstrate your credibility by proving your ability to get results. Third, they give the reader what they want most...a glimpse of the benefits that they can expect to achieve if they use your product or service. They answer the “What’s in it for me?” question.

When you present case studies, consider using the Problem -> Solution -> Result format. In other words, the case study should present the problem, reveal the solution, and report the results.

Suggestion # 3 — Use Surveys, Studies, Charts, Graphs, and Evidence

People like to “see” the proof. People seem to find the results of surveys and studies not only interesting, but very credible. Using charts and graphs to graphically display the results of surveys and studies adds to this effect.

Displaying evidence is another very effective method of exciting your visitor while building credibility. For a good example of the display of evidence visit www.buyingwebbusiness.com. Notice the scanned image of the check that Kirt Christiansen received when he sold his small diamond website for over \$100,000. Actually seeing the check provides evidence that he’s telling the truth, while getting the visitor even more excited.

Another tactic that I use in my web copy as evidence is to use actual newspaper articles. If you visit www.toxicmoldanswers.com, about half-way down the page you’ll notice that I’ve included a full article about how toxic mold is destroying people’s lives. It is very effective.

Suggestion # 4 — Use Thumbnail Photo Galleries

Humans like to look at pictures because people are visual. Like the saying goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” By using photos you can convey a lot of information, and by storing them in thumbnails you can enlarge the picture for better viewing and control the loading time.

At the bottom of each of your webpages you should display your full contact information. Yes, even your phone number. The majority of people will not call you, but the fact that you make your phone number available tells them that they could call you if they wanted to.

Element # 2 — Include an “About Us” page.

I have found that my “About Me” page is one of the highest traffic pages on any of my websites. Why? Because people are curious and they always want to know who you are. Having an “About Us” page tells your visitor that you have no problem revealing yourself and that you have nothing to hide.

Element # 3 — Include photos of your brick and mortar presence.

If you have a brick and mortar store or office it means that you have been around and your really do have a real business. Just knowing that you do business in an office building breeds credibility. No one wants to get ripped off in a fly-by-night deal, and the picture of your office shows that you’re not going anywhere soon.

Element # 4 — Include testimonials of industry experts.

Are there independent professionals in your industry that have (or are willing to) endorse your product or service? Displaying an endorsement from a known expert can give you an immense advantage in winning people’s trust.

Element # 5 — Use a reputable merchant account.

Taking orders over the web by asking your customer to send you a check or money order not only screams “amateur,” but will be a huge roadblock to getting orders. To go one step further, I don’t even recommend using PayPal. When net-savvy people see that you’re using PayPal it tells them that you are not selling the volume necessary to afford a real merchant account.

Element # 6 — Provide a solid guarantee.

One of the fear factors that net consumers have is not being able to get their money back if something goes wrong. Providing a strong guarantee tells your visitor that you stand behind your product and that there is little risk in purchasing your product or service.

Element # 7 — Provide a picture of you and your staff.

People don’t buy from businesses, and businesses don’t buy from businesses. People buy from people, and people who work for businesses buy from people who work for businesses. The more you can include about you and your credentials and successes, the more people will feel good about doing business with you.

Don't Forget Expired Domain Names

Thousands of domain names are expiring every day! Many of them are great domain names that for one reason or another have been abandoned. The nice thing about expired domain names is that at least one person determined that they had value, so they're not just dried up boring leftovers.

You can pick up a great expired domain name for less than \$10. Many services exist to find expired domain names but the following two are a few of the best.

BIZMINT — www.bizmint.com

UNCLAIMED DOMAINS — www.unclaimeddomains.com

Domain Naming Services

Can't think of a good domain name? Here are a few services to help you find your ideal domain name.

NAMEBOY — www.nameboy.com

DOMAIN FELLOW — www.domainfellow.com

123FINDER — site.123finder.com

E-GINEER DOMAINATOR — www.e-gineer.com/domainator

WHOIX — www.whoix.com/wizard.html

RAINING NAMES — www.rainingnames.com/advanced.asp

DOMAIN GURU — www.domainguru.com

HOMEPAGE NAMES — www.homepagenames.com

SNAPIT NOW — www.snapitnow.com

IC — icdomainnames.com/domain-name-generator.shtml

EYEONDOMAIN — www.eyeondomain.com/domainname.html

RED HOT DOMAIN NAMES — www.redhotdomainnames.com

What If The Domain I Wanted Is Already Taken?

It's disappointing to come up with a great domain name only to find out someone has already reserved it. Don't despair... The name may become available. But if it's a valuable domain name, you can bet that its going to be swept up fast. Using the following two services you can not only monitor the domain name's status but grab it as soon as it becomes available.

SNAPNAMES — www.snapnames.com

EXPIREFISH — www.expirefish.com

Choosing a good domain name is important and should be considered carefully. Follow the rules above and you won't go wrong.

Mistake # 16 — Online Myopia.

Definition of “Myopia”

My•o•pi•a — 1. A vision defect in which objects are seen distinctly only when near to the eye. 2. lack of foresight

“Online myopia” is immersing yourself in the online world to the exclusion of the brick and mortar world. Believe it or not, most people still live in the physical world and prefer physical things. Electrons will never totally displace the physical world.

Online myopics believe that not only they are 100% online, but that everyone else is too, and that they prefer to everything online. This is false, and will always be false. Most people would rather...

1. Hold a newspaper in their hands rather than read the news online.
2. Receive a postcard or letter via snail mail than read an electronic letter.
3. Throw a video in the VCR than watch a video on their computer monitor.
4. Talk to people over the phone or face-to-face than communicate through email.
5. Visit your physical store rather than get on the Internet and browse your website.
6. Sit down in Barnes and Noble to read a book than read an online ebook.

I learned this the hard way after investing a very large sum of money (many thousands) in Webvan — the online grocery store that was supposed to replace the neighborhood grocery store. After millions and millions in venture seed money, Webvan closed its doors in disgrace.

Why? Because people like their grocery shopping experience. They like to feel their tomatoes, inspect their meat, push their shopping carts, and read the National Enquirer while waiting to check out.

These are human traits. A baby can't survive sitting in a room by itself, even if it is fed. It requires human interaction. So do we.

The most successful online businesses marry their online processes with offline processes. Here are a few tips to leverage your online presence with the human element.

Tip # 1 — Provide multiple means of contact — a fax, phone number, and snail mail address. This shows your visitor that you're willing to speak with them by any means.

Tip # 2 — Call people for customer service problems. The online world has learned that their customers don't like email as a means of customer service. People want to talk to people to get their problems solved.

Tip # 3 — Advertise your online presence offline. Just yesterday I opened a “Home Business Opportunities” magazine to find Tatiana Velitchkov advertising her online site,

1. "Trey Ryder's Lawyer Marketing Alert"

Author - Trey Ryder

Topic - Marketing advice for lawyers

Website: www.TreyRyder.com

2. "Words that Sell"

Author - Kris Mills

Topic - Copywriting, Direct Mail

Website: www.WordsthatSell.com.au

3. "Web Business Today"

Author - Damon Zachariades

Topic - Damon's whimsical comments on emarketing

Website: www.ReportSecrets.com

4. "The Referral Minute"

Author - Bill Cates

Topic - Referral tactics for finance professionals

Website: www.BillCates.com

5. "The Publicity Hound's Tips of the Week"

Author - Joan Stewart

Topic - Publicity tips

Website: www.PublicityHound.com

6. "Give to Get Marketing Newsletter"

Author - Joe Gracia

Topic - Small business marketing strategies

11. Contests
12. Expert interviews (by you)
13. Product reviews (books, tools, websites etc.)
14. Jokes, quotes, and anecdotes
15. Results of tests and polls
16. Progress on specific projects

Your content is only limited by your imagination. Many of the above mentioned newsletters contain one or more of the 16 types of content I just mentioned.

For instance, the Wordnet Chronicles has a project called, "SquiddlyBob." SquiddlyBob is an online product review business that is being developed and launched by Wordnet.

In each issue Ralph Hilliard survey's his readers for input on the project and he also updates the reader on the progress he's made. It makes for some very interesting reading.

Both the Publicity Hound and DEMC newsletters include answers from readers that were asked by other readers. It's interesting reading other people's views and opinions (I've contributed my own opinions to both those newsletters on several occasions - it was fun!)

How to Create Your Content

Fear of the inability to create worthwhile content is probably the number one cause of people not starting their own newsletter. Some people think they can't write and so they don't.

Listen, everyone can write about something. Everyone has something worthwhile to say. Just go for it. Now, I know that sounds like a silly recommendation but you'll never get started if you don't try.

Step 1 - Pull out a calendar and make a writing schedule with deadlines. If your newsletter is scheduled to go out every Wednesday, then your article deadline should be noon on Tuesday. This will give you time to proofread your text and assemble the newsletter.

Step 2 - Make a list of topics that you want to write on. Magazines call this their editorial calendar. You should develop your own editorial calendar so that you know what you're going to write well in advance of your deadline.

With an editorial calendar you'll find yourself saving content and ideas that you've run across that will help you write your articles. It will also discipline you to think and plan

Idea # 1 – Create a resource box at the end of the article with your name, your marketing message, and contact information. Then submit your article to newsletter article directories such as the ones I’ve given you above. Publishers will consider your article for reprint in their publications.

Idea # 2 – Develop a list of ezine publishers and ask them for their permission for you to send them your completed articles for consideration in their newsletter. You’d be surprised how many will say, “Sure.” This list of publishers will become a goldmine for you as you continue to publish more articles.

Idea # 3 – Submit your articles to offline, brick and mortar magazine publishers. Many small magazines are dying for good content. Again, you’ll be surprised how often you’ll get published. There are also a lot of offline newsletters and journals that may be interested in your article.

Idea # 4 – Post your articles on your website. Make sure you search engine optimize your webpage for the article that you’ve written. This means, create meta tags for the title of your article, a brief description of your article, and keywords for your article. Once your website gets spidered, your articles may land in the top ten under the keywords and phrases you’ve chosen.

Idea # 5 – Compile your articles or groups of your articles and create a free viral ebook with links inside that will bring traffic back to your site. Send them out to your list and invite them to pass them along to their friends and associates. Before you know it, you’ll have thousands of copies of your ebook floating out on the net bring you traffic from the four corners of the world.

Idea # 6 – Assemble your articles and create an ebook that you can sell for profit. This is an easy way to develop your own book. You might even consider self-publishing the book. Visit www.booksjustbooks.com or www.MorrisPublishing.com to learn more about self-publishing your own book.

Idea # 7 – Assemble a few of your articles into a five or six part email Autoresponder course that you can offer to your visitors in exchange for their email address. This tactic has worked excellent for me. I space my ecourse installments four days apart and send it to every one who signs up to my newsletter.

Idea # 8 – Create special reports out of your articles and sell them for profit on your website. You can even take your articles and create an audio recording of them and sell the audiocassette tapes off your website for a higher price.

These are just a few of the innovative things you can do with your article archive. The possibilities are endless. If you’ve put the sweat and tears into producing your article, make it work just as hard for you!

What Makes an Ezine That Gets Read?

Rule 7. Don't create your newsletter in MS Word and then copy and paste it into your text editor. It will bring over weird codes that you can't see that will show up in your reader's browser, but not yours.

Rule 8. Use a lot of bullet-pointed lists. Lists are simple to read and are easier to comprehend. Use arrows, stars, numbers, dashes, stars, carats etc. to start the lines in your list. Here's some examples:

- word

* word

=> word

1. word

> word

~ word

Rule 9. Use endings to end your newsletter. You can include specific instructions, your contact information, and any copyright clauses.

Rule 10. Use a table of contents if you have multiple distinct sections of your newsletter. This way your reader knows what is inside and what to expect right away.

Step 5 - Develop a Strategy for Capturing, Storing, and Managing E-mail Addresses

It makes no difference if you have a fantastic newsletter if you have no one to send it to. You must develop a strategy for capturing your visitors e-mail address.

Here are a few tips to start you off...

Online Strategies

Tip # 1 - Put an optin box on every page of your website. Go to <http://www.PublicityHound.com> and notice Joan Stewart's optin box. It's in the same place on every one of her pages.

Tip # 2 - Use a popup to ask people for their e-mail address. Although most people hate popup, they work. Your optin rate will increase the moment you start using a popup.

You might consider using an exit popup or popunder, which is displayed as your visitor leaves your site. This is less obtrusive.

You'll probably need some help from the service that you are using to set up your system. But the first step is to...

1. Gather all your e-mail addresses

Gather the e-mail addresses from all the business cards you've collected, the contact information in your rolodex or contact management system, and any other source of contact information. This will be your initial mailing list.

The second step is to...

2. Install and set up your system

This will include setting user preferences and options to customize your newsletter service.

If you went the software route you'll usually have detailed instructions that come with it. If you went the Internet-based route there should be some online instructions. In either case, there should be a tech support line in which you can get the help you need.

The third step is to...

3. Hook up your website to your system

Finally, you'll need to modify your website to work with your optin boxes so that subscribes and unsubscribes are automatic.

Some people will probably need to hire a webmaster to get this working for you. You can always call on a technical person to help you over at <http://www.RentaCoder.com>

In some cases, your website and newsletter management system might not be hooked together at all. This is especially true with desktop-based systems.

Step 7 - Create and Test Your First Newsletter

It's time to actually create your newsletter and test it. Simply write your article, format it, cut and paste it into your system and send it to yourself.

As I already mentioned, consider sending it to multiple e-mail accounts that use different email programs such as hotmail, yahoo, MS Outlook, or Eudora.

Consider sending it to a few friends to get their feedback. You'll find their comments helpful, because they'll probably see some things that you've missed or they might have a different email program that manages your newsletter in a different way.

Although there are no reliable industry averages for the amount of people that you can get to come into the store from a phone call, if you can convert 50% you're doing pretty well. The idea is to improve your phone call close rate over time.

A few tips on getting people off the phone and into your store:

1. Make them an offer to come in. You might give them a complimentary audiocassette on how to buy a spa. You might have gotten a great deal on a premium that you can give out to those who come to your store (towels, shirts, mugs, movie tickets etc.).
2. Don't unnecessarily give out your prices over the phone. This takes away the number one reason for your prospects to come see you.
3. Ask them to come in by giving them a choice of two times, one in the morning and one in the afternoon or evening.
4. Pique their curiosity by telling them you have something special to show them and that they will be pleasantly surprised when they arrive.
5. Let them know that supplies are limited and you are about to run out. If they come soon they'll be able to get one of the last ones.
6. Make specific appointments and particular time slots. This will make you appear busy and will make your caller feel that they need to get some of your limited time.
7. Highlight your unique selling proposition and let them know that they won't find that benefit anywhere, and that they need to come down and see it.
8. Be nice and pleasant over the phone. It's better if a female answers the phone, because females are more trusting and pleasant than men. People like working with people they like.

Measuring Closure Rate

The third measurement to be concerned with is how many visitors you convert to spa and pool owners. Understanding this statistic will require you to keep strict records on how many people come to visit your store each day, each week, and each month. These numbers should be segmented by the source. Here is an example of what the form might look like:

Date	Name	Address	Phone	Email	Source	Status	Phone
11/20/2001	John Feinstein	1432 Hock Way	232-889-4556	Jfein@Juno.com	News Ad	Close	Yes
11/20/2001	Mary and Tom Hamner	34 Post Oak	232-009-4538	MTHammer@ev1.net	News Ad	Close	No
11/20/2001	Julie Berkenstock	3390 Uinta Way #24	232-443-8854	Julv@JSC.com	Referral	Pending	No
11/20/2001	Joe and Cindy Belcher	909 Johnathan Smelcher Dr.	232-996-6835	Joe@aol.com	Drive By	-	Yes
11/20/2001	Mindy and Sam Steed	887 Restinia Blvd.	232-996-9356	Mindysam@aol.com	News Ad	-	Yes

The "phone" column means that they called before they came. Keep it simple or make the form more elaborate, but be sure that it tracks information about where they heard about you, how many you closed, and if they called before they came. From this information you can determine the measurements we have talked about which will help to determine how well you are spending your marketing dollars.

How to Make Yellow Pages Ads Work for Your Small Business!

Yellow Pages ads can bring you a pot of gold... if they're done correctly. The book is often the first place that buyers go before they decide from whom to buy. Eighty-four percent of the people who go to the Yellow Pages contact a business listed there and 49% of them actually go on to purchase something from that business. That is why Yellow Pages are so important!

People go to the Yellow Pages with intent to buy. You don't have to create demand for your product; it's already there. All you have to do is convince the buyer that you should be the business that they call first.

The only downside to Yellow Pages advertising is the cost of the ad placement. It's not a one-shot deal. It is a commitment for a full 12-month ad run. It is essentially the same as going down to your local paper and making a deal to run an ad every day for the next year without the opportunity to stop or change the ad throughout the year. That's a huge risk. I don't know any businesses that do that except for car dealerships, but they get to change their newspaper ads as often as they like.

95% of All Yellow Pages Ads Are Weak!

As you can see, Yellow Pages have a potentially big payoff but also have a big risk factor. That's why you need to be very careful about any ad that you place. It needs to be a winner. If it isn't, you'll be flushing your money right down the tube every month and there's nothing you'll be able to do about it. If you're going to advertise, make it pay off.

The good news is that 95% of all Yellow Pages ads are WEAK. Why? Usually, because small businesses worry more about how much they are going to spend rather than the ad itself. Far too many businesses let the Yellow Pages company do the ad design and layout. Big mistake!

This is the advice you'll typically get from a Yellow Pages rep:

- Use a big ad
- Use a heavy border around your ad
- Add color to it
- Use a bigger ad
- Make your name and logo really big, and have a lot of "white space" in your ad
- Use an even bigger ad
- Give your hours of operation, phone number, address, as well as the MasterCard and Visa logos (if you accept them)
- Use more than one really, really big ad under multiple listings!

that you can be trusted. This information makes a BIG impact on how you develop your Yellow Pages advertisement.

It's important to remember that people do NOT look in the Yellow Pages to determine whether or not they should buy a product or service. They have usually already thought that through. That was phase one of their buying process. Now they are moving into phase two: the gathering of pertinent information that will help them make their decision.

You Must Be Different!

Notice the first item on both lists indicates that people who use Yellow Pages ads are looking for something that catches their eye and that differentiates you from all the other "look-alike" ads in your section. Most ads in a given category say the basic same thing.

Why?

Well, usually when the deadline to put in the ad is fast approaching the business owner will often look at what other competitors are doing and create their own, based on what other competitors have done. Now, who do you think has produced many of the other ads in that section? Right, the Yellow Pages ad company, probably the same guy (or gal) who is selling you the ad!

This is a big mistake. People desperately want to pick out something different about your ad that will make them call you. They don't want to shop all day and make a bunch of calls. They want to find a business that offers benefits that match their wants, and then move on with the buying process.

You must be different! You must design your ad so that it stands out and provides the right information for your customer, which forces him to call YOU instead of your competition. With this in mind we are ready to talk about the key elements of your winning Yellow Pages ad.

“With 15 Years of Custom Pool Design and Construction Experience and 1,000’s of Happy Customers...”

...You Can Be Assured that You Will Get Exactly What
You Ask For (and a whole lot more...its our promise!)”



Your dream has finally come true. You have decided to build your own backyard pool. Congratulations, you deserve it!

Now comes the hard part. Choosing a pool provider and having it built. You’ve probably heard a lot of horror stories by now from people who had to wait for months just to start construction. And after tons of cost overruns your provider

springs the bad news on to you and expects you to pay right away. What was once a dream has now turned into a nightmare.

At Janis Pools we have a client list of literally 1,000’s of happy customers. We’ll even let you talk to them. Every one of them! **We guarantee that we will do the job right the first time.** Call for our FREE Insider Secrets special report.

Dear Joe:

We thought we would write you a note to let you know how much thrilled we are with our new pool and spa.

We expected to use it only three nights a week but we’re in there nearly every night. It’s the only time me and Sally get to have a decent conversation.

When I was in your store I told you I had a bad back. Joe, it’s never felt better. The difference is incredible!

Well thanks again.

Mike and Sally Robles

We Keep Our Promise!

- Free Designs
- Free Estimates
- 100% Financing
- Call Right Now!**

Bells and Whistles

- Gunte Pools
- 450 SqFt Water
- 3’-5’ Deep
- Pool Pump
- Heater/10’ Gas Line
- Auto Clean System
- Auto Chlorinator
- Moss Rock Waterfall
- Flagstone Coping
- ...and more!

“Insider Secrets to
Building the Pool of
Your Dreams”



Call our toll free 24-
hour message line at

800-876-4435

To Get Your **FREE**
Special Report Today!

Alvin • Spring
1420 FM 392 East
Humble, Texas 77077
345-876-9928
(Next to Walmart)

JanisPools.com

Call around to other advertisers that are not competing with you in your heading and ask them what type of discount they were offered. Use other business' discounts as a baseline for negotiations. Your Yellow Pages sales rep desperately wants to sell you ad space. Use that leverage to your advantage.

Yellow Pages Resources

www.standoutdesign.com — Designs Yellow Pages ads

www.max-effect.com/index.html — Designs Yellow Pages ads

www.adfx.com/ — Designs Yellow Pages ads

www.yellowpageexperts.com/ — Full service Yellow Pages company including design, competitive analysis, ad reviews, research studies etc.

Foreign Yellow Pages — Go to www.Business.com and search for “Yellow Pages”

www.commmnetmarketing.com — National Yellow Pages account management

www.yellowpagesprofit.com/ — How-To manual and tips

Conclusion

Yellow Pages ads are critical to small businesses; however, they present a big risk as well. Make sure that your ad is critiqued by a direct response expert to ensure that it pulls well, because once it gets placed, you'll have to live with it for the next year.

Use attention-getting headlines and offer an information product to entice readers to call you. Use eye-catching pictures sparingly and include your biggest unique benefits. Consider using customer testimonials to build trust and make sure you tell the reader to call you now!

The bigger the ad the better, but always remember to get a proof before the ad is placed. Mistakes can be deadly. Use color if you can afford it, but make it a low priority. Before placing your ad, test it in the newspaper to see how well it pulls and then track its effectiveness throughout the year on a month-to-month basis.

Hold out to the end of the phone book's promotional period and then ask for a significant discount. Call other advertisers to get a feel for the types of discounts each Yellow Pages directory gives out. Don't accept less than a 50% discount.

The information in this chapter will save you thousands of dollars if used correctly. If you have any follow up questions about Yellow Pages advertising, for your small business don't hesitate to call me. May your Yellow Pages ads attract new prospects like flies on molasses!

SPECIAL REPORT

SECRETS OF

DIRECT MAIL

SUCCESS!

Preview from Notesale.co.uk
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HOW TO USE

DIRECT MAIL

TO BUILD YOUR

SMALL BUSINESS

By David Frey

In the “Low-Risk, High-Response” section I talked about using someone else’s relationship to be introduced. However, what if that isn’t possible? What if you have no relationship with the person we are mailing to at all?

To get an above average response, you need to build a relationship with your readers the same way you would in person, which is through an introduction and repeated interactions. Once you have a relationship with your reader, the barriers of mistrust and fear will vanish and your response rate will shoot up.

Many times people don’t respond on your first contact — not because they didn’t want what you were offering, but simply because the time might not have been right or the they got distracted. They might very well want what you have, but just forget and never take action. It’s nothing different than having to remind someone every once in a while to get something done.

10 Tips to Remember When Doing Sequential Mailings

The following are 10 tips about sequential mailings that you should remember to make your campaign effective:

1. The higher the lifetime value of a customer, the more sequential mailings you can afford to do. If one sale is worth thousands of dollars, then doing 10 to 15 mailings over 20 or 30 weeks may be in order.
2. For a normal consumer mailing for a low-priced product, don’t do over three mailings. In three mailings you should be able to attract a good response.
3. Each mailing needs to be linked with the last mailing. You can do this by mentioning the previous mailing in your next direct mail piece. I often do it by putting a red stamp at the top of the letter that says, “SECOND NOTICE” with some copy talking about the previous mailing.
4. Don’t let too much time elapse between mailings. Perhaps one to two weeks may be fine, but any longer than two weeks, your prospect will forget who you are.
5. Make sure each envelope and letter has a similar look and feel as the others, in order to help the reader make a stronger connection between the first and all subsequent letters. If your direct mail items don’t look similar (envelope, letter, offer etc.) to previous mailings, people will find it harder to make the connection. In fact, some direct mailers use the exact same letter and offer for each step in the sequence.
6. Use an automated system, such as a contact manager like ACT or Goldmine, to remind you when to send each letter in the sequence. ACT has a great function called the “Activity Series” that will help you send out each mailing in the sequence at the right time.
7. Clean your addresses from letters that come back to you so you don’t waste your money by doing unnecessary mailings.

I also use one other type of envelope that gets opened every time. They are envelopes that look like an Air Express or FedEx letter. You can find these types of envelopes at www.responsemail.com. They are incredibly effective.

NOTE: One note about the stamp you use. One of the first things that reveal whether you're a bulk mailer or not is the stamp that you use. If you meter your mail, your recipient will know that you mail in bulk, which contradicts your attempt to make your letter appear personal. If you really want your letter to get opened, use a humble first class stamp.

Creating and Using a Swipe File

Perhaps the easiest and most value-added habit I have formed as a marketer is to create a "swipe file" — a collection of other people's creative news articles, newspaper and magazine advertisements, or direct mailings.

Companies have paid thousands (sometimes hundreds of thousands) of dollars to high-paid direct response experts to create articles, ads, and mailings that work. Why not use their work as a "creative starting block" for your direct mail piece?

Before you start to say, "That's copying and it's illegal!" I should explain that all you use your swipe file for is to get your creative juices flowing. I call this method "creative inspiration."

I have sat for hours thinking about what I want to create for an ad. I don't anymore. I just open my swipe file and within minutes I'm creating. Don't limit your swipe file to just marketing pieces from your industry. Put any ad or direct mail piece in your swipe file that jumps out at you and catches your attention.

One of my most successful direct mail pieces was based off of a letter I received from a company that sent me an invitation to a local seminar about a home-business opportunity maintaining pop machines!

Instead of just chucking the mail like I used to, I look at my mail differently now. I see it as the most inexpensive marketing education that I could ever receive. Why throw your mail away? Save the best pieces for your swipe file.

Testing: The Key to Ultimate Direct Mail Profits

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!" How many times have you heard that quote? It's true in real life and it's true in direct mail marketing. The difference is that when you try again in direct mail, you must change something.

How many times have you heard this quote, "If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you always got." Testing is all about making small changes in order to achieve a higher response rate.

impression that there are a lot more ways, but that you just decided to list ten. Non-round numbers just sound more believable.

In a study done by the Wall Street Journal the number seven (7) has been found to be a number in which more people respond to. So try to end your numbers with a seven.

11. Guarantees

The more powerful the guarantee the lower the risk you put in your offer. People fear guarantees because they think that people will take them up on it and they'll be out of business or spend all their time refunding purchases. This simply isn't the truth. The truth is that most people don't return their purchases and don't take advantage of guarantees.

The ones that do take advantage of your guarantee will have done so no matter what type of guarantee you have, even if it's weak and you didn't promise anything. In essence, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

12. Use a two-step process

Never try to sell a high-priced product or service in one step. It won't work! Big purchases require a significant amount of education and relationship building. Your primary objective is to get your reader to request more information or come to your place of business. Nothing more. It must be a risk-free action on their part.

People are naturally skeptical. They need to make small steps. Convincing people to go to your website or to your information phone line is a non-threatening step that your prospect may be willing to make.

This is a key point...remember it. It could mean the difference between a successful or failed mail offer. Remember, inform first, and sell second.

13. Write to One Person

When you write your letter you need to mentally block out you, your business, your friends, your prospect's friends, and everything else. You should just write to a single person as if they were the only person with whom you are talking.

To remind myself of this sometimes when I write copy I will get an enlarged picture of a typical reader who meets the demographics of my target prospect. In this case it might be a man between the ages of 40 to 55. I put small "problem stickers" on him that represent the problems he has.

Some problems that I might include are not enough money, doesn't need it right now, their problem isn't that bad etc. In addition, your prospect probably distrusts you personally and doesn't believe your solution works.

This little copywriting tactic helps me to focus on who I am writing to and what problems I need to address in order to get the person to respond.

14. One Objective Only

It's easy for a prospect to get sidetracked and confused. There should only be one central objective of the direct mail piece. You need to determine this objective before you start writing your letter. This may sound too obvious to discuss but it isn't. If you are trying to get people to call your information line to request a free report, don't confuse them by asking them to come into the store.

All your copy should focus on that one central theme. If it's to make a phone call then your testimonials should say, "And when I called the toll free information line..." and your benefit section should say, "and when you call right now you'll receive..." and your call to action at the end of the letter should be, "Call right now."

15. Test and Improve

Sometimes you don't know if you have a bomb on your hands or a true winner. The only way you'll know is if you test. Your first test mailing should always be small. Measure your response rate to determine its successfulness. If you're getting well below a 1% then you should alter something and then test again.

Your first piece you sent is your "control" piece and your next mailing should be compared against it. If your response rate goes up, then your second piece becomes your control piece for your next mailing. If you tweak something and send it again and your results go down, then your second mailing continues to be your control piece. You continually tweak and test until you have a control piece that is bringing in the desired response rate.

Some people ask me what they can expect their response rate to be. My answer is that I have no idea. It depends not only upon the strength of your letter but also on the mailing list it was sent to.

16. The Postscript

Every letter should have a P.S. It is the second-most read item on any direct mail. Make your P.S. a restatement of your offer, your prime benefit, your main idea, and a request to order right now.

Why are postscripts so important? Because normally a person will read the top headline and the bottom of the letter.

17. Code Everything

Free Publicity Secrets: How to Get the Media to Call, Visit, and Beg for Your Story

The other day I picked up the newspaper and read the headline, “Ex-High School Teacher Helps Struggling Students Improve Their Grades.” The headline immediately caught my eye because I recently developed a system for high school and college students to improve their academic performance.

In the article it talked about a Houston woman who retired from high school teaching, and now holds study skills workshops around town for high school students that need academic help. It included her contact information and website address.

It was a quarter page article in the Houston Chronicle with over one million circulation. When I saw the article I wondered to myself how much that same article would have cost her if she had paid for it.

LOTS!

The Power of the Humble News Article

There are only two ways to land the name of your business in the local newspaper — by paying for an advertisement or by having a newsworthy event that is covered by the local press. Both can be very effective, but the all-mighty news release can provide the level of credibility and respect that can spark on-the-spot sales for your business.

Advertisements contain information that people know is biased. Surveys have shown that the vast majority of people believe that all advertisements contain false or misleading information.

News articles, on the other hand, are written by third-party news organizations that have nothing to gain by endorsing your business. Hence, their believability is high. That’s exactly why your print ads should use an editorial style format. People read editorial style (news article format) seven times more than an advertisement!

Why Are Some News Releases Chosen and Other Not?

Knowing how the press chooses one news release over another will give you an advantage in getting the coverage you’re looking for. Most large pressrooms get hundreds of news releases a day. When yours comes in, it competes with all the others that come in with it.

Typically, an “Assignment Editor” is the person who has the responsibility to determine what is “news” and what isn’t. This person is in charge of reviewing the incoming releases and either assigning them to editors or trashing them. Typically, an Assignment Editor will sift through press releases like you go through your mail...over a wastebasket.

If a news release doesn’t catch their eye they immediately trash it. The first item on the press release that is read is the headline. If you don’t have a catchy headline that grabs the editor’s attention then it won’t stand much of a chance making it to the next step — the first paragraph.

Your first paragraph should tell what your news is, whom it’s about, where it will be, why it’s important, and when it will be held. The opening paragraph needs to get to the point fast with no fluff. If it’s as compelling as the headline, you have a good chance of having the entire release read.

What News Stories Get Covered?

To give your business the best chance of being covered by the local news media, give them what they are looking for. Generally speaking, each of the different media is looking for specific types of news events.

Newspapers want information that is interesting and informative. Newspapers like to educate their readers with timely news and articles that people will find interesting and educational.

Radio is a lot more loose and has an “anything goes” type of style. Radio stations like information that is controversial, funny, or weird. One of the most popular five minutes of a local radio station here in Houston is the “Birthday Scam,” in which the DJs call up an unsuspecting person (on their birthday) and proceed to create a combative and hostile conversation full of accusations and lies. The sparks start to fly and so do the ratings.

Television gets excited about anything that can provide great visuals. Sponsoring a local high school reading contest in which the principal gets dunked in a tub of Kool-aid will get the T.V. station’s attention.

All media love human interest stories. They know that people like to know about other people. In fact, the number one topic of talk radio is relationships. If you have a good human interest story that others would find interesting, you’re on your way to getting lots of free publicity.

Lastly, the biggest mistake that most PR novices make is to pitch an advertisement for their business. The media publishes news...they are not your personal marketing department! You must be newsworthy!

8. **Include all your contact information.** Not including your cell phone, pager number, fax, phone, or email can mean making or missing an interview for a story.
9. **Become a walking sound-bite.** Be ready to be interviewed at any time.
10. **Be Persistent.** If you haven't come up with the right angle today, try again, and again, and again.

8 PR Pitch "Etiquette" Secrets from Bill Stoller of PublicityInsider.com

1. **Don't call to "see if they got your release."** Journalists hate this. If you really want to get a story in the Post, call first to pitch your story and then follow up with your release, photos, etc.
2. **Plan your call around their deadlines.** Most papers are morning editions. Thus, journalists' deadlines range from 2 p.m. local time and on. Don't call during this time! The best time to reach a newspaper journalist: 10 a.m. to noon local time.
3. **Don't start pitching right away!** This is rude, as the editor may be on the other line, working on a story, entertaining guests or who knows what else. Start by saying something like, "Hi Ms. Smith, my name's Bill Jones and I have a story suggestion you might find interesting. Is this a good time for you?"
4. **Pitch to the voice mail.** It's fine to pitch your story to the reporter's voice mail. Keep it very short and end the message with your phone number. If you don't hear back, try again until you get the actual reporter or editor on the phone.
5. **Don't read from a script!** The bane of many journalists' existences is 22-year-olds sitting in cubicles in big cities reading pitches off a sheet of paper. If a telemarketer doing the same thing has ever called you, you know how annoying it can be. Practice your pitch so that it seems natural and spontaneous.
6. **Give them a story, not an advertisement.** Newspapers do not exist to give you publicity. They exist to provide readers with interesting stories. Make your pitch newsworthy, exciting and relevant.
7. **Follow up immediately.** If she's interested, the editor will ask for more information. Be sure you have a press kit (including news release and photo) ready to send. Send it out via priority mail, and write "Requested Information" below the address.
8. **Call again.** Now it's appropriate to call to see if the editor received your stuff...after all, unlike a mass-mailed release, she asked for it! Ask if she's had a chance to look through it, and what she thinks. If she likes what she sees, you're about to get some very valuable publicity!

M2 PressWIRE — Europe's largest international press release distribution network; charges a flat annual fee rather than per release www.presswire.net/

MediaWeb — Distribution to media within South Africa
www.mediaweb.co.za/submitnews.asp

Press Release Centre — Low-cost distribution of your news to Australian media
www.pressrelease.com.au/

PR Newswire — Like BusinessWire, but geared to distributing releases on general (not business) topics www.prnewswire.com/

Press Flash — Fax distribution of Internet-related stories www.pressflash.com/

Press Release Network — Offers, among other options, distribution to the Top 100 Internet Publications for only \$99 www.pressreleasenetwork.com/

PR Web — Free wire service containing all type of releases. www.prweb.com

Question # 10: Where do I find editors to send my press releases to?

Alternative Press Online Directory — Jump site for hundreds of leftist, feminist and alternative-lifestyle publications www.altpress.org/direct.htm

Directory of Local Daily and Weekly Newspapers — State by state, town by town listings of local newspapers and contact info
www.buzzmove.com/mom-mag-copy/local-media.htm

Ecola — Jump site for more than 8,400 newspapers and magazines and 1,100 TV stations
www.ecola.com/

e-TradingPost — Free submission of your release to your selection of national TV stations, newswire syndicates and top 100 daily newspapers
www.e-tradingpost.com/publicity.html

MediaINFO — Unlike other online media directories, this one also includes city guides, syndicates and news services emedia1.mediainfo.com/emedia/

News365 — Another media jump site, not as complete as Ecola or Newslink but contains topical Web sites that the others miss www.news365.com/

Newslink — Find links here to thousands of newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations worldwide ajr.newslink.org/

US Newspaper Links — Extensive although incomplete links to U.S. newspapers, radio stations and TV stations by state and locality www.usnewspaperlinks.com/