

The Edge Newsletter...

Marketing and More, for Your Business

Issue 1 | February 2009

Greetings,

Welcome to the first edition of *The Edge*, a newsletter dedicated to business owners. Our job is to make sure that you have the tools you need to stay afloat and ahead in the current marketplace. Every month you will get information about marketing and business communication strategies, guaranteed to put you ahead of the competition.

You'll also hear from companies and organizations just like yours that are facing the same challenges as you are. They will offer information, share tips and best practices on how you can turn this economy into an opportunity to grow your business as never before. There you have it! *The Edge* provides you with simple, straightforward advice and strategies that never go out of style or cease to work.

Remember this newsletter is for you. If you have specific concerns or want to share tips and suggestions of your own, feel free to let me know at editor@edgepointconsulting.com

Together we can use this downturn in our economy to turn our businesses around and prepare ourselves for the upswing that is sure to come.

Sincerely,

Judy Forbin-Morain
Editor

Last minute Valentine's Day hints & tips.

- Thank your clients with a **Free** Initial consultation for their Valentine, good for use in February only.
- Don't forget to collect email addresses for all of your clients. Use them to keep clients informed about promotions, offers and handy tips they can use. They'll thank you for it with more visits and referrals.

5 Marketing Strategies That Won't Break The Bank

So, the economy is a mess and sales are down. How do you respond? Well you can throw your hands up and wait for the tides to turn or you can market, market, market. What is that? You don't have a marketing budget anymore? Yes you do, it may be smaller than it was a year or two ago but I am sure you still have one. Here is how you make the most of what you have.

According to a Forbes.com article published in 2008, many companies start cutting their marketing budget when things get tight. However, all the research shows that you should actually be ramping up your

marketing efforts or you risk being forgotten, or losing your competitive edge.

When most business owners hear the term marketing, they envision expensive TV or radio ads, tons of colorful flyers, shiny brochures and expensive direct mail campaigns. If your budget prohibits many of the things on this list it does not mean that you cannot spread the word about your company or organization and effectively attract clients. The key is to choose high impact, low cost strategies. We've managed to pull together a great list of these that any business can use to great success.

Now before you tackle the list, I want you to know that as my mom loves to say, there is nothing new under the sun. This is one of my mom's favorite sayings and after years of much eye rolling on my part every time she said it, I have come to believe it as much as I believe that the sky is blue. Having said that, many man hours were spent reading marketing literature written by experts, scouring the web as well as drawing from the experiences of successful business owners. The result is Part 1 of our list of ten common sense, affordable and most important, EFFECTIVE ways to get the word out about your company and generate sales.

The Top 5

1. **Call past customers.** It's that simple. If they liked your work before they may want to use your services or buy your product again. Though you may think that a previous client is still talking about that great campaign you did, or remembers how unbelievably delicious the dinner you catered for their last board meeting was, chances are that he/she has a million other things going on. So it is your job to get back on that client's radar. Simply place a call to your client and let them know that you are contacting existing clients to offer them a special discounted rate on the product or service that you offer, or even better, send them something for free (see Tip #5). Even if they are not making a purchase at that time you have just re-opened the lines of communication with a past client and are now back on a their radar as THE company to call when they need the product or service you provide.
2. **Get a little famous!** You're in the business that you're in because you're good at it right? Then let the world know. There is no better way to gain free exposure than to market yourself as the expert. How about speaking at your next chamber of commerce meeting. Or offering to host a workshop at the professional association you belong to. If you're in the travel business lets say, offer a free article to your customers on how to plan a vacation on a budget. These strategies accomplish a very important task; they label you as knowledgeable about your industry. Additionally, you never know who might be on the receiving end of your voice or how far that article may go via the web. Case in point, I recently attended a workshop for new entrepreneurs at a local business library. One of the presenters owned a franchised travel agency and jewelry making business, all done while she earned her living as a social worker. After her presentation on how to run a successful home business, she received multiple requests for information on her jewelry line and to book travel through her company. Presenting herself as an expert on running a home business automatically gave her an extra selling point with potential customers who just moments before had simply been workshop attendees! So find out where you can share your knowledge today, it may bring you rewards you had not even thought possible.
3. **Use social networking sites.** Sites like Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn are essential if you're going to promote your business online. If you do not have a presence on at least one of these sites you are missing out on opportunities to drive traffic to your site and create your brand in the marketplace. For more information on the why's and how's of social networking... (see Social Networking..Magnify your PNQ below)
4. **Update your company's face.** Have you reviewed your business cards, web site, and other business communications lately? Are they presenting your company in the best light? Simple changes like updating the landing page of your web site, offering a coupon for services on your web site or on the back of a business card will increase the ability of your marketing materials to attract clients. Use a reputable copywriter who specializes in marketing writing to ensure your marketing

materials are primed for optimum sales appeal.

5. **Give Away Something for Free.** We all love free stuff. Lets face it, even if its just a free pencil or an extra snack from the vending machine we are excited to get something for nothing. There is no limit to the number of high value but low priced 'free' items you can give away to potential clients, here are a few: pens/pencils with your logo, an article offered as a download from your web site, a coupon and free tips related to your product or service. For example, if you're a personal chef you can email your customers tips on how to pick the freshest, fruit or fish at the market. As a clothing retailer you can tell customers the advantages of Egyptian cotton over a cotton polyester blend. You get the picture. Now more than ever customers want to know that they are getting real value for the money they spend. Giving it to them does not have to cost you more. For more ways to 'Give' your way to increased sales [Subscribe to our Mailing List](#)

There you have it. Look out for the next 5 tips in Part II of our budget friendly 5 More Marketing Strategies That Wont Break The bank, in the March issue of *The Edge*.

Social Networking-Magnify your PNQ

Becoming a member of social networking web site ranks as one of The Edge's top 5 ways to market your company for free, with potentially huge dividends. Sites like LinkedIn, Facebook and yes, even MySpace have helped boost the bottom lines of many an entrepreneur by increasing their **PNQ or Productive Networking Quotient**. The Productive Networking Quotient is simply a measure of the prospective clients you attract as a result of your networking efforts. I am sure you have attended networking events that were high on the social aspects but ended up being a mere exchange of business cards along with the consumption of high calorie hors d oeuvres and watered down drinks. Online social networking allows you to make real connections with prospective clients without leaving your home or killing your diet.

The beauty of these sites is that any business from Bakeries to Ant Farms can use it effectively. The advent of online networking allows businesses to reach and attract visitors with similar interests through the oldest and still most effective sales tool, word of mouth. Word of mouth is arguably the strongest referral as it automatically vets the company or organization as being competent. Your goals on an online social networking web site are to leverage the power of word of mouth, provide a link to your company web site and tell the world about your business.

As with everything else there is a right way and a wrong way to use online social networking sites to your advantage. First, you want to register on more than one site to increase the number of possible links back to your company web site. Once you set up your profile with your company information and link to your web site you can begin to build your network. How do I do that, you say? It's simple.

Find groups or communities within the site that share the same interests as you and/or are related to your business. For example, on each of my social networking profiles I am affiliated with writer's groups, entrepreneurial and marketing consulting groups. If you currently use Facebook and other sites to stay in touch with friends I suggest you prepare a separate profile for your company or organization. There should still be a blurb about your business along with a link to your site on your personal profile page. However, prospective customers will want more information about the product or service you offer, and not details of the party you attended last week or pictures of your kids mugging for the cameras!

Visit the groups of others, leave comments, listen more and talk less, but when you do, make it count. This step is key, as you visit the groups or discussion boards of your area of interest, observe the way the board flows as well as how current users comment or offer advice. Once you get acquainted, jump in! A user wants to know how to hire a plumber? Offer some pointers if you own a plumbing company. A new entrepreneur wants to find out more about how to start a business that is similar to yours? Offer inside information on what worked well for you. If the information you share is useful to users on the board, you will soon become a presence that is valuable and you guessed it, referable.

Create a signature to be used in posts on boards. Most sites and discussion boards frown on a blatant plug of your business or web site, but it is customary and advisable to use a signature that identifies who you are and what you do. Your signature could be a user name that relates to your business somehow, like ChefJen or WebWriterProPete. A company logo that is also a link to your site is a good idea as well.

Exercise proper board etiquette. Don't be 'that guy'. The one who uses the board to plaster his link, shoot down other user comments or finds a million not so subtle ways to mention that she is the owner of a fabulous spa on Main St. every chance she gets. Instead, listen more than you contribute and when you do share make it valuable and use that opportunity to offer a link to anyone who is interested in more information or would like to view your services. A consistent presence (2 or more times each week) on a few sites will put you on the road to prospective clients sooner than you think. A Google search will pull up a list of many entrepreneurs for whom this method of networking has worked. A fellow copywriter Michael Stelzner has built a very profitable copywriting business and continues to use forums and discussion boards to draw high paying clients as well as a following of copywriting professionals seeking his advice as an expert copywriter, myself included.

Offer something for free. Once you have established yourself as an expert in your field it will be time to ramp up your self promotion. A quick survey of the leaders in your industry will show that many, if not all of them are offering a freebie or two to their customers and users on their web sites. It may be a free trial of its services, or a weekly email offering free useful tips to its clients. The word free is a powerful marketing tool if it is used correctly. Try to think of the emails you currently look forward to because they add value to your life or your business. For me it is the emails that come from fellow copywriters with new information about the industry or a download of the latest in the world of freelancing, all written or vetted by professionals I trust. For you it may be an article about new web design tools, downloadable tips about improving customer service at your spa or salon or an offer for a free trial of a new line of film for your freelance photography company. Keep ideas like these in mind when you decide what you would like to offer to your clients or visitors to your site.

The end result of promoting yourself via online networking works like this. Users and potential customers on that site follow links to your site for information or just to check you out. Each visit to your site increases traffic and thereby increases your chances of appearing near the top of a google search. Where you appear on a Google search results list is directly related to the amount of traffic to your site as well as identifies your company as reputable the higher it ranks on this list. Following the guidelines described, you hold the power to tap into a huge network of customers, many of whom will be coming to you ready to do business after having been referred to you or seeing your comments on a discussion or group board or forum.

Until next time, go with this. "If you're attacking your market from multiple positions and your competition isn't, you have all the advantage and it will show up in your increased success and income."
Jay Abraham-Marketing Expert

Sincerely,

Judy Morain
Edgepoint Copywriting & Consulting