

Inexpensive Marketing Strategies

Most business owners rely on just two or three marketing strategies to attract new business. However, there is a multitude of ways to drive new business to your door, some of which include using Information Technology as a tool.

Here are a few examples:

NETWORKING

Networking is perhaps the most commonly used approach by small business owners. However, it is often poorly executed. Many people attend a networking function and take the wrong approach by trying to meet as many people as they can. They bounce from person to person, handing out business cards like it is a Sporting event and they are running for the gold medal. They fail to realize that the most effective way to network is to cultivate relationships and give referrals to other members first. A great tool for networking and referrals on the internet is www.linkedin.com. Another mechanism used, is to search for specialised directories and ensuring that your web page is listed. As an example, in your preferred web search engine, simply type in variations of your industry type followed by the word "directory".

REFERRALS

This marketing strategy places a close second in preferred methods of generating new business leads. The key here is to ensure that you take a proactive approach rather than a passive one. Instead of assuming that a satisfied client will refer someone to you, ask for that referral. Tell people who your ideal client is and ask for their help in finding these types of clients. The real estate agent who represented the seller when they bought a house sends a card every year and reminds the seller that she loves referrals. It is not pushy, does not sound like she s begging, and it helps generate new leads.

WRITING

This often under-utilized marketing strategy is an excellent way to become recognized as an industry expert. Every industry has trade magazines and most are hungry for good content. The Internet is also filled with web sites and e-zines looking for material to send to their subscribers and customers.

NEWSLETTERS

This is another powerful marketing strategy to keep your name in front of your customers and prospects. Provide key insight into business challenges and offer solutions to them. In other words, help your prospects and customers solve problems. Some newsletters are nothing more than advertising so be sure to provide valuable information to your customer. Although it is less expensive to send a newsletter electronically, you can issue it in paper format. Software is available that is capable of bulk emails providing the right infrastructure in which to send mails to a vast mailing list whilst protecting your business from being listed as spammers.

COLD CALLING

Without a doubt, this is usually the most challenging way to market a business - I know very few people who actually enjoy cold calling. However, it can be a good way to uncover qualified prospects in a relatively short period of time. Be sure to start your conversation with a good opening to capture the other person s attention.

GIVE FREE INFORMATION

At a marketing workshop, the facilitator suggested giving information to interested prospects. You do not need to give away ALL the information relevant to your product or service. Instead, offer information that will help your target market with their problems. Documents such as the one that you are currently reading, offers free information with the intent of deriving business.



Service Level Agreements
Hardware Supplies & Support
Software Supplies & Support
Web Page development
Network Design & Implementation
Firewalls & Security
Internet Connectivity Solutions
Mobile Office Solutions
Retainers & Maintenance Solutions
Project Management Services
Office / Branch Connectivity

OFFER A GUARANTEE

A concern many people have when changing suppliers is the risk associated with the change. They may not be completely satisfied with their existing supplier but the risk of choosing a supplier who may be worse can prevent them from changing. Eliminate this concern and offer a guarantee.

ADVERTISING

This can be a great marketing strategy if you know how to create a good ad. The best marketers know that great sales copy is what makes the difference. Glance through the ads in your trade magazine and you will quickly notice that most ads focus on the company's product features instead of on the customer's problem. Create a great ad by concentrating on the problem you can solve.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Our future generation are all technically orientated, spending vast amounts of time online using cell phones and computers. Time spent in most cases is used to update and communicate via social media pages such as Facebook, Twitter and Mixit. These social media pages can be used to attract potential customers simply by creating, maintaining and ensuring you have a presence. Facebook as an example is an excellent tool to keep your customers up to date with product launches and new developments. However, before taking a step into the social arena, ensure you have developed a well thought through strategy as once you become social, customer feedback will become a lot more prevalent and public. Development of a strategy must involve your IT support company or IT Department so that the control systems required to manage a social strategy are put into effect.

Written by: Brian Smith, Managing Director, IN 2 IT