

## Use the Power of Marketing To Build a Successful Business

### Marketing for Success

Everyone wants to build a successful business. People might have different ideas about what success means, but everyone would agree that a successful business is *profitable*. It earns enough income to provide a living for its employees and a decent return for its owners. Moreover, this profitability makes the business sustainable. It can endure and continue to benefit its owners, employees and customers into the future.

So what does a business need to be profitable? Among other things, it needs *customers* to buy its products. Customers buy after they hear about a business and become convinced it offers something they want. This does not happen automatically – it requires *marketing*. Beyond running an ad or putting up a sign, marketing is everything a business does to spread the word and convince people to buy. It is about getting people to know and like what you offer, so they choose to become customers.

If success requires profits, and profits require customers, and customers require marketing, then marketing is indeed a hot button for success!

### Obstacles Ahead

Businesses face a set of marketing challenges:

- People have virtually *infinite choices* for where they spend their hard-earned dollars.
- It is difficult to be heard in an *over-communicated society*.

Did you know there are 24 million businesses in the United States? That is 480,000 per state on average. Consider how easy it would be for a person to make a purchase at any of these establishments, whether by telephone, Internet or in person. The fact is that your business is competing with millions of others for a share of the public's spending. This is truly a global economy. So how can one business stand out and make it in an environment where people have so many choices for spending their dollars?

Effective marketing makes all the difference.

Yet some take the *Field of Dreams* approach and say, "If you build it, they will come." Set up a shop, hang out a shingle with your name and the world will beat a path to the door. That may have been true in a day and age when people had few options for spending their money – for instance, if you owned the general store in an Old West mining town or the blacksmith shop in a medieval village. However, this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where electronic communication and fast, inexpensive transportation make the world very small and people's spending options very large. The new reality is, "If you build it and market it effectively, then they will come."

Did you know that the United States has 6% of the world's population and 57% of the world's advertising? Think about how many ads you see or hear each day on television, radio, Internet, e-mail, signs and billboards, newspapers and magazines, mail, vehicle panels, blimps – you name it. It is overwhelming. It can make you downright dizzy if you try to pay attention to all of it. So people learn to tune out most of it, unless they are looking for something specific or the message and media really stand out. This is a normal reaction to an over-communicated society. (You can imagine cave men did not have to deal with all of these distractions!) So your message is competing with millions of others in a society already overwhelmed with communication. Yikes! How can a business be heard on this crowded stage?

Again, effective marketing makes all the difference.

Yet many practice me-too marketing. This is marketing that looks and sounds like everyone else's. "We make pizza too!" or "We sell office supplies too!" Nothing in the message significantly distinguishes it from others. It blends in and gets lost in the shuffle. But you want people to hear your message and remember your business. You want to be in the spotlight, front and center stage.

Here again, effective marketing makes all the difference.

### **Wind at Your Back**

While challenges exist, you also have some things going for you:

- What your business offers is *unique*.
- You do not have to be an expert to market your business effectively.

Being unique is the way to stand out in a busy world. This is the opposite of me-too marketing. It lets you be heard instead of blend in. For example, what comes to mind

when you think about Starbucks, Federal Express and Southwest Airlines? These companies were the first to offer (on a large scale) gourmet coffee drinks, overnight parcel delivery and low-cost, no-frills airfare. When coffee was just coffee, Starbucks said no, it is espresso, cappuccino, latte. When the Postal Service said first class takes two or three days, Federal Express said no, it is overnight. When airlines said air travel is for those who can afford it, Southwest Airlines said no, it is for everybody. Today people remember these names because they offered something unique and different. They stood out from the crowd.

Now here is the good news: Your business is also unique. We say this as a matter of fact because businesses are like snowflakes – no two are alike. Perhaps your business is unique in terms of its products, services, location, longevity, the people working for it or the people you serve. There is always something unique. Whatever it is, it will set you apart and give people a reason to remember.

Nick's Pizza & Pub in the Chicago area builds its restaurants out of wood from 100-year-old barns. It actually disassembles the barns and uses the lumber. Their Midwestern clientele enjoys this traditional touch, and it gives them an interesting topic of conversation over dinner. One might ask, "What does old wood have to do with Italian food and drinks?" Well, nothing. But it is a unique, noteworthy feature that sticks in people's minds. That is reason enough to highlight and promote it!

Further good news is that you do not have to be an expert in marketing to promote your business effectively. All you need is to:

1. Understand what makes your business unique.
2. Be able to communicate it clearly and distinctly.
3. Actively engage in marketing as a key part of your business.

These three steps are the essence of effective marketing. First, pinpoint what makes your business unique. This topic deserves careful consideration because it requires you to make a choice and take a stand. Since it is not practical to portray everything about a business, you must choose the one or two things that are most unique and relevant. Highlight them in your promotions and you will have best chance of being heard and remembered.

Second, craft a message that communicates this unique value to your prospects clearly and distinctly. It does not have to be fancy or glitzy, just clear and distinct.

The final step is ongoing: Make marketing a consistent part of your business routine. Being a successful marketer first requires action and commitment. Engage it and continually refine your tactics. You may want to hire a skilled marketer or work with an outside marketing agency to assist with this effort – whatever it takes get started and maintain the momentum.

### **Go For It**

There is one more ingredient we have not mentioned – *passion*. Passion brings tremendous energy and focus. If you know what makes your business unique and can get excited about it, you can market with the best of them. Add passion to a solid marketing foundation, and your campaigns will burn instead of flicker. You will get your message across.

If you want to build a successful business, use the power of marketing to stand out, be heard and win customers. Now go for it!

#### **About Apropos**

Apropos is a marketing services firm that helps businesses grow through streamlined, cost-effective marketing. We serve as an extension of your marketing department and offer a broad range of services.

Contact us today for a business-building brainstorming session!

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