

PRINTtips

Fresh Ideas for Self Promotion

What do display ads, brochures, advertising specialties and post card mailers have in common? They are all proven ways to promote your company and its products and services. Each one reminds customers who your company is and what it does.

But what if you have an ample supply of brochures, your monthly post card mailing is right on schedule and you don't have the budget for more advertising specialties. What else can you do to keep promoting?

In this issue we'll give you some fresh ideas for self-promotion that are easy, clever or unusual. We hope you'll try some of them and let us know what kind of success they achieved.

Calendar Advertising

As we approach the end of the year, people will begin to look for year 2003 calendars. A calendar is useful and may also be beautiful – in either case, your customer will keep it. A single calendar can give thousands of hours of advertising exposure. For an average of seven hours a day, 250 days a year, a calendar displayed at your customer's place of business remains highly visible

not only to your customer and his employees, but also to his clients.

There are many calendar formats you might choose for self-promotion. Those handy pocket card calendars that used to be ubiquitous in retail stores all December are much less prevalent today, making them a good item for self-promotion.

Another popular personal calendar is a small booklet style with room to make notes.

Generic wall calendars are a possibility, but why not take a more creative approach? Get a team of your co-workers together and determine what dates next year might be significant to your top customers. Consider industry events, local school schedules, bowling or other sports league dates, as well as national holidays. We can help you design and personalize a calendar for each of your important customers.

Testimonials

Testimonials are a great way to give a product or service credibility. People are always interested in reading what others have to say because it reassures them that your product or service works.



When you ask a customer to provide a testimonial, be prepared to offer copy that your customer can use as a guideline for the testimonial. Providing the copy in electronic format, either via e-mail or on diskette, is an added touch that should make collecting the testimonial even easier.

Referrals

Each of your customers has a sphere of influence with others who may also be good candidates for your product or service. Ask customers with whom you have a good relationship to provide you with the names of three individuals that may benefit from doing business with you. Ask permission to use your customer's name when you introduce yourself to

the prospect and followup with your customer to report how the contact turned out.

Informative Giveaways

Informative giveaways can be a great help to your customers. People love receiving things for free, especially when they have value.

Booklets are one of the most popular informative giveaways. You can create your own booklet based on your expertise in your industry to provide useful tips and tricks to your customers. Or you can design a booklet of cultural or special events happening in and around your community. These are popular because customers can so easily access event information.

A “welcome” packet for new businesses and residents is another great way for your sales team to meet prospects. Welcome packets establish your business as a resource. A welcome packet might include a community map, information about the city or town, discount coupons and some type of advertising from your company.

Advertorials

Making ads look like news articles can increase readership. Rather than a hard-sell approach, advertorials offer useful information that generally gives them more credibility than traditional ads.

Reprints

If you submit an article to an industry journal and it is accepted for publication, or if your company is featured in a newspaper or magazine, the publication will often give you permission to reprint the article. Reprints offer a great way to advertise your company. After you have secured permission to reprint, we can help you reproduce the article in a convenient distribution format. And don't forget to have the article framed or mounted to hang in your lobby or office.

Open House

A business open house provides a great opportunity for your company to display its best work, to expose customers to new technologies, and to introduce staff that your customer may never get to meet otherwise. If you decide to hold an open house, be sure you have lots of information available. Be ready to answer any question that a customer or prospect might ask. If possible, have some of your best customers at the open house to provide testimonials.

Instructional Seminar

If you or someone on your staff has a technical skill of value to your customers, consider holding an educational or training session to pass on the information. Invite a select group of customers to your location or to a hotel meeting room for the class. When planning the seminar, be sure to ask customers what time of day is most convenient and how long they can spare for the training.

Coupon card

Turn your business card into a valuable “keeper” by printing the back with a coupon or other offer. You can also give away more than one and ask the person receiving it to pass it along to friends who also might benefit from the offer.

Self promotion can be very creative

As this issue has shown, ideas for self-promotion can be tailored to fit many circumstances and budgets. We will be happy to work with your to develop some of these ideas when they involve printing or design. Just call us for an appointment.



One aspect of self-promotion is to recognize your employees for their achievements, then issue a press release to get the word out. Begin by reviewing employee actions to find things that deserve recognition. Some examples are years of service, an on-the-job safety record, the invention of a new company product or any other “pro company” idea or activity.

Open the press release with the five “w”s — who, what, where, when, why — focused on the employee. Provide enough information to make the press release newsworthy and issue it on your company’s letterhead. Be sure to include information on who to

contact if there are followup questions.

Compile a list of local newspapers and magazines as well as your industry’s trade publications. Be sure to include local chambers of commerce and other community organizations that publish newsletters for their members. Learn the submission requirements for as many publications as you can, then conform to them as it increases the likelihood that your press release will be published.

Here are some resources to help you write a press release. Or contact us to request our tip sheet for press releases.

Six Steps to Free Publicity by Marcia Yudkin (Plume, 1994)

As the title describes, this book provides practical advice for a small business publicity campaign.

The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual

(Addison-Wesley, 1992)

A guide for spelling, punctuation, as well as information on avoiding libel and respecting copyright.

The Elements of Style by William Strunk and E.B. White

(Macmillan, revised 1979)

This book is the time-honored guide to clear writing.

a vocabulary of the graphic arts

Display advertising: The combination of display type, photos and illustrations used in advertising. Contrast with *classified advertising*.

Logo: Short for *logotype*. An image used to uniquely identify a company. Logos may be composed of text, a graphic or a combination.

Trademark: A symbol (logo, text, name, etc.) used by a company to identify either the company itself or one or more products produced or marketed by the company.

Product attribute: an inherent or natural characteristic of a product.

Product feature: an aspect of a product, often manufactured or designed to relate to the product attribute.

Product benefit: a benefit that derives from a product feature or attribute.

Consumer or customer benefit: a benefit based on how the product benefit delivers a positive result to the consumer.

Value: a human dimension reinforced by the benefit.

Laddering: the process of moving through the sequence of product attribute, feature, benefit, consumer or customer benefit. The usual method is to ask people why a feature or benefit is important. The answer generally moves you up the ladder. Products become increasingly differentiated as consumers move up the ladder.

Use Public Relations for Self Promotion

Advertising is a common way for businesses to self-promote. Purchased ads establish branding and effectively sell products and services. And yet as powerful as advertising can be, there is another powerful but often overlooked tool available to expand the impact of advertising. That tool is public relations.

Public relations is the practice of relating to people by providing information they need to know or

want to have. Though it is less direct than advertising, public relations in some cases can be more persuasive to the intended audience because it generates good will for the business providing useful information.

Letters to the editor of your local newspaper or magazine can be used for public relations. Call your local newspaper whenever something is happening in your industry that might affect people in your community.

Public service announcements also provide the opportunity for you to get the word out. These 30 to 60 second announcements for radio and television are often used by non-profit organizations.

Establishing yourself as a local expert is another form of public relations. Offer to write a weekly column in your community's newspaper on topics of interest drawn from your industry. Or become a speaker for community organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions or Soroptimist.

Q. *I send a weekly letter to prospective clients. Is there an inexpensive way to increase the likelihood that the envelope will be opened?*

A. Good question! A weekly letter containing useful information is a great way to self-promote. However, if the recipient throws the letter away unopened, then your effort has been wasted. To counteract the human tendency to throw away mail from unknown organizations or individuals, play to people's natural curiosity.

Use teaser copy on the outside of the envelope – but not the usual kind. Try printing the first few sentences of an intriguing story in a conspicuous place on the envelope face.

Or include a short note on the envelope that promises a benefit if the prospect opens and reads the letter inside.

“Lumpy mail” is nearly irresistible for most people. Inside the envelope, enclose something dimensional – a small pencil, a key chain, a coin – that creates a lump or bulge in the envelope. Most people can't help themselves – they want to know what is causing the lump, and they will open your envelope looking for the object.