

Creative Marketing 101:

Simple ideas that yield great sales results, even for non-marketing folks!

If your competitors have marketing budgets far beyond yours; don't fret, get creative!

These ideas can be used in any marketing effort, whether you are selling to Fortune 500 companies or raising funds for your daughter's softball team. Here are 10 ideas to create great results with a small budget.

Idea 1:

Your goal is to create "share of mind." Share of mind is simply creating and maintaining a place in your prospective customer's mind that makes them think of you when the time comes for them to buy what you offer. The most common example is the realtor's note pad they deliver every month in hopes that when you decide to sell your house that their name and number are on your mind and in your hands.

Big companies know that creating share of mind is very valuable and very expensive. Small companies realize that their budgets will allow them to do this in only a very limited way.

Idea 2:

The key to success for tight budget marketing is to have a good list of highly qualified prospects. Be sure that you have carefully checked your prospect's personal information (the spelling of their names, etc.), their willingness to consider you as a source (they do not have a multiple year contract with your competitor), and their potential profitability to you (it is best to focus on those prospects that have the ability to spend the most with you, if you can offer them compelling reasons to buy from you.)

Idea 3:

Clarify what your competitive advantages are. Ask your best current customers why they buy from you, instead of your competitors? You might be surprised by what they say!

Idea 4:

Decide how you want to tell the story of your unique qualities and competitive advantages to this small set of people. As always, actions speak louder than words. So focus first on the actions that might deliver your message best, leave fancy writing for poets (how much advertising text do you really read?)

Make your actions tell the story of your competitive advantages. If you are faster and more responsive than your competitors, then your marketing should be faster and more responsive too! It should arrive predictably, neatly, and include a step for you to show the precision and reliability of your follow through (for example, your mailing could arrive every Monday morning for a few weeks, with the last message say, "I will call you on Wednesday before noon to see if you have time to discuss your needs." The great opportunity to prove that you really are fast and responsive is to definitely call them on Wednesday before noon (even if you can only leave them a voicemail that says you called them when you promised you would.))

Idea 5:

One message you certainly want to plant firmly in your prospective customer's mind is that you are very interested in doing business them. Not just once, but over a long period of time. The best action to send that message is to make many good, small impressions on them in a variety of ways; mailing introductory letters, post cards, product flyers or catalogs as appropriate, small gifts of useful items with your name on them,

Idea 6:

Use your competitor's messages for your own purposes. If your big competitor has spent millions creating what everyone agrees is a great reputation for low prices, you can use their advertising budget to your benefit by saying, "You know our competitor has great prices, well, we have all the same prices (show them a comparison of your prices and the competitor's), plus you also get this (your top competitive advantage) and this (your second competitive advantage) and this (your third competitive advantage.)"

Idea 7:

Make an impression by making many good impressions in a short period of time. We often focus too much on first impressions and not enough on repeated impressions. Our world is so full of new things, people and situations, we have to choose very carefully which to ignore. Once we see patterns of these impressions, we begin to take note and the impressions start making an impact on us... even if we are not conscious of it. So, rather than trying to "Wow" potential customers at the start of your marketing efforts try impressing them with the consistency and predictability of your messages over time. A drop of water on a rock will just splash the first time, but over time that drop hitting the same spot over and over again will cut a hole all the way through the rock.

Idea 8:

Once you have told your story, follow up to find warmth. It is like you have planted a bunch of seeds, if you don't go out to harvest them, all your seeds and efforts have been wasted. To reap your harvest you (or your sales staff) need to

personally touching each well-qualified and now well-prepared prospect, with a clear invitation to begin working together.

Idea 9:

Make it easy to take a test drive. Look for any opportunity to show, by your actions that you are reliable and committed to working with the prospective customer. The goal is to take on an obligation for that customer. For example, it would be great to get a first order for some very profitable item. But, in the absence of that, why not a small order for some item the customer is having problems finding? How about just promising to get more information or pricing for the prospect? All of these are great opportunities for your actions to deliver the message that you are reliable, committed, and capable.

Idea 10:

Be ready to pour gasoline on any signs of warmth. Before you go into any meeting, think through what your desired outcomes are and what paperwork, information, responses, or other tools you might need to handle them quickly and professionally. Once you have gotten any warmth at all, you need to have all the fuel possible close at hand so you can get the fires of your budding relationship burning bright before the hubbub of daily life puts them out again!

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Sloan Creative Group offers web and print marketing help to local businesses throughout North America. Visit <http://www.scg411.com/> for more information and to set up a free 30 minute consultation.