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Be Creative When Marketing Your Business

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For many small business owners, marketing can be one of the most challenging and frustrating aspects of business ownership. According to Jay Levinson, author of *Guerrilla Marketing*, "The typical owner of a small or medium-sized business knows he or she ought to invest in marketing. But being typical, the owner isn't too sure about marketing in the first place, let alone the costs involved." Furthermore, many entrepreneurs have limited financial resources to invest in developing and implementing a strategic marketing plan.

So, while most entrepreneurs have lots of knowledge and determination about their business, they may lack sufficient finances and marketing expertise to launch an effective and successful marketing campaign.

This isn't all bad; in fact, it can nurture the growth and development of an innovative and imaginative marketing philosophy. Marketing is one area of a business where creativity can be especially refreshing and effective. Here are some inexpensive and creative ideas that may assist you in developing your marketing strategy:

- Develop a catchy slogan and logo that will identify your business and set it apart from your competitors. In other words, give the business personality! Create a personality that makes your customers enjoy doing business with you. How about coffee and donuts for your customers in the morning and cheese and crackers in the evening?

- Get as much free publicity as possible. Contact newspapers and magazines and describe who you are and what your business is doing. Make sure you stress what is new or different about your business. This will catch their attention and may improve your chances of getting free publicity.
- Ask family members, friends, and colleagues to help spread the word about what you are doing. Keep them armed with brochures and business cards from your business.
- Become involved in public service organizations and network groups, and use contacts made through them.
- Encourage word-of-mouth advertising by offering incentives to customers who bring in new business. A discount on their next purchase is one perk to consider. This not only helps you get new customers, it also creates repeat customers.
- When you advertise, focus on your target market. Don't advertise indiscriminately. Consider less expensive weekly newspapers, regional magazines, and classified ads.
- Include your family. Children and spouses may have innovative and creative ideas which may help you develop promotional strategies. Get them involved with the promotions as well.
- Sponsor an open house to showcase your product or to discuss your service. Offer door prizes, special seminars, or samples of the product you are selling. Always send your customers home with something from your business that has the business name and phone number on it.
- Obtain free publicity by donating to charitable events such as fairs and raffles sponsored by church and civic groups.

Try incorporating a few of these ideas into your marketing plan. And remember, promoting your business can be fun (for you and your customers), effective, and inexpensive!