

Increasing Customers—Low Cost Promotional Techniques

(Compiled from a variety of Sources)

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Eleven Ways To Find Customers

By Janet Attard

What's the hardest thing about starting a business? For many new business owners, the answer is "Finding customers." Having a great product or service that you are sure many people will need isn't good enough. Customers won't find you or your web site just because you have started selling a product or service. Indeed, most business owners have to go on regular and frequent fishing trips to find customers and keep new business coming in their doors. But how do you do that? Here are several suggestions to get you started.

Develop a plan. Consider who would make the ideal customer. If you sell to businesses, consider what department is most likely to buy your products or services, and what individual (what level of responsibility) would be the one to determine the specific purchase requirements. (Make some calls if you don't know!) Then consider how that individual would normally find products or services like yours. What circles do they travel in? Who are they likely to listen to or where do they look when they want to buy a product or service. Find a way to put your information, or yourself, in their path.

Realize there is no one path to success. Sales often happen because prospective customers hear about your products and services in several different ways and from several different sources. The more often they hear about you, the more likely they are to consider what you have to offer when they are ready to buy.

Work your local newspapers. Daily and weekly newspapers are an incredible source of contact information and leads to potential customers. Watch for names of people who have been promoted, who have won awards, who have opened new businesses, or who in any way may be potential customers. Send those people personalized mailings letting them know the benefits of what you sell. Try to attend meetings they will be at, as well. When you meet them or send mail, let them know you read about them and congratulate them on their success or mention how interesting the article about them was.

Watch for events that may bring your potential market together. Contact the organizers of the event and offer to give away your product or service as a prize during the event in exchange for having the group promote you in their promotions.

Attend meetings and seminars that your prospects might attend. If you've been doing that and haven't made contacts that could lead to sales, look in the newspapers to see what other organizations hold events that might attract your target market and attend some of those meetings.

Follow up after meetings. Contact the people you've met to see if they may be prospects. If they say they don't need your services now, ask when a good time to call them back would be, or if they have business associates who could use what you sell now.

Give a little to get a lot. Give away free samples of your product and ask the recipients to tell their friends if they are pleased. Or, if you are a consultant, give away some free advice. This could be in the form of a newsletter with that contains news or tips and hints, or it could be a free consultation during which you provide just enough information to help the client scope out their project and know that you have the ability to handle it.

Work your personal network. Ask your friends if they know of people who can use your services, or people who may know others who could use your services. If your pricing structure will allow it, offer friends and business associates a finders' fee for referrals that turn into jobs. Study your competition. Advertise where they do. Promote yourself where your competition promotes themselves.

Use multiple small ads instead of one big one. If most people in your type of business advertise to bring in customers, you should do the same. But don't plan on making a big splash with one large ad. Plan smaller ads to run over a long time in the same publications that your competitors advertise in. The repetition will build name recognition. If you advertise in the yellow pages, consider taking out ads in multiple category headings. If you provide office support services, you might want to advertise under the

Ask for feedback when prospects don't buy. Did they find a product that better served their needs? Did they decide they don't need the product at all? Did they just postpone their buying decision? Did they find it difficult to place an order on your web site? Use what you learn to make needed changes and watch your sales start to grow.

Customer Retention Tips

By Jane Pollak

In early July I received birthday cards from family members, close friends and Peter, my car salesman. I'd like to think that I'm such a one-of-a-kind person that even my car guy remembers my date of birth, but I'm not that arrogant.

I'm aware that my name is in a database system. The company must distribute the cards to the appropriate salesperson for a personal signature. Posting them for well-timed delivery completes the process. Even knowing all this, it still felt nice.

Add that gesture to the perfect long-stemmed rose Peter presented me with when I picked up my new car last October. And to the assistance he provided the day I locked my keys in the trunk when filling it with a cart full of purchases from IKEA. Over the phone Peter helped me find a local expert who could rescue me from having to call my home 30 miles away.

The bottom line in all of this is that when it comes time to get my next car I'm already 95% predisposed to stay with the brand I've got. The magic words here are customer retention or customer loyalty. Why would I stray to another car manufacturer and relationship when I'm so happy with the way I'm being taken care of?

You've probably heard that it's harder and more expensive to get a new customer than to keep a current customer. What tools, programs or details do you have in place to help you hold onto your current clients?

Here are some simple, inexpensive and memorable suggestions that I use:

1. When traveling for business or on a vacation, print out a list of your top 10-25 current clientele with names and addresses and mail a postcard from an exotic place. I received an enthusiastic 'thank you' from each client to whom I sent a postcard from Paris when I was there in July.
2. Take note of your client's birthdays or other special occasions, add them to your database and send a card to honor the occasion. I've marked down September 16th on my calendar to mail out a 'congratulations' card to a new client who will be celebrating a grand opening that day.
3. On a day-to-day basis, respond to phone calls and email in a timely manner. This is a simple, yet disciplined way to show your customers you care.

In fact, it all comes down to caring. Any business can use these strategies, but they don't.

Not only do I want to be a customer of a business with these thoughtful practices, I also want to be a business owner who cares enough to institute them. Don't you?

Six Proven Low-Cost Marketing Ideas

By Sharron Senter

Small businesses must be extra imaginative with their marketing efforts in order to attract customers and get them to open their wallets. Even more challenging is that most entrepreneurs have shallow pockets and shoppers are being more selective as a result of the sluggish economy and volatile stock market. The following are six proven low-cost marketing ideas that help small businesses increase sales and generate referrals while spending very little.

Get Out and Walk

Next time you walk down a street with high foot-traffic, pay attention to storefront windows underutilized. Approach the store owner and offer to pay a small fee to advertise your business in their window. Imagine, you pay \$50 per month for a location that costs someone else \$2500 a month in rent. This idea also works in reverse. If you're the store owner with great window visibility, approach other entrepreneurs and offer them an affordable advertising opportunity.

Special Deal Today Only

The next time business is slow, try sending out an email to your prospect list that reads, "Please call me. I have a special deal I can offer you if you call me today. You'll be glad you did! (978) 000-0000. Thanks, Sharron." This method really works. Prospects call because of the urgency you create using such a short deadline and to make sure they don't miss out on a worthy opportunity. Be careful. You'll lose credibility with your prospects if your offer isn't aggressive enough, i.e., 10% off won't cut it!

Under Your Nose

Are your vendors doing business with you? Why not? Here's a short list of the prospects you should contact within 48 hours of reading this article, your: accountant, attorney, plumber, electrician, daycare provider, housekeeper, greens keeper, mechanic, realtor, friends, family, minister/priest/rabbi, etc., dentist, physician, gynecologist, nail technician, hairdresser, Mary Kay Consultant, marriage counselor, coach, personal trainer, financial advisor, etc. If you and your vendor are not a match, he or she probably knows someone who should be doing business with you. All you have to do is ask your vendor to provide some word-of-mouth about you. At minimum, ask to display your business cards and flyers at their office, or to mention your business in their customer newsletter. Take a moment and make sure people in your immediate circle understand what you're selling.

Customers on the Fence

Before you send off your next proposal, call your prospect and tell her the proposal she requested is ready. Tell her you'd like to forward the proposal, but before you do, ask her what time tomorrow would be convenient to discuss the proposal. Remember, always set up your next appointment before releasing any information.

Charge at Least Five Bucks

Always charge a fee for all your event marketing efforts. Fee-paid seminars and workshops almost always generate more participants than free events. The fee does two things. First, when you charge for something, there's an implied "value" built in. Your prospect will believe they "get more" when they pay, versus not paying. Second, when a prospect pays you, they're showing a commitment and are now a more qualified prospect and more likely to show up. Don't just take my word for it; test it. It's true.

Stimulate Customer Senses

Do you think the smell of fresh baking bread flowing throughout the grocery store or music playing is by chance? Absolutely not. Retail businesses have been going out of their way for years to stimulate shoppers and keep them browsing. Stimulating the senses works outside of bricks and mortars too. For example, let's say you're a business development expert and you're getting ready to mail your quarterly newsletter on white stock. Instead, try a red or pink-hued paper. Or, if you'd prefer to remain conservative, use a white textured stock. Another example: There's nothing worse than the smell of a disinfectant used in a doctor's office. Try burning vanilla candles in the waiting room, they'll help soothe your customers while they wait. If your business is notorious for long waiting room times, fresh baked cookies work well.

Remember, the more comfortable we keep our customers, the longer they'll stay, the more memorable experience they'll have and the more they'll spend, or pass on positive word-of-mouth. When you're planning your next marketing activity, remember to stimulate your customers' senses, including eyes, ears, nose and mouth.

Word of Mouth Marketing Has Built Many a Profitable Company

By John Jantsch

It's just human nature isn't it. If you get a good deal on something you want to brag about it. Or if someone asks you who painted your house and you were really happy with how the job went you have no problem telling them what great service the company provided.

That word of mouth advertising is invaluable and that's what I'm going to talk about today. In Duct Tape terms I call it referral marketing. Most business owners are familiar with this type of marketing and in fact when I ask business owners how they built their business they almost always tell me that initially it was through word of mouth.

Yet rarely do I find businesses that take this fact and turn it into the business-generating powerhouse that it is. The key, like most Duct Tape marketing strategies, is a systematic approach. While businesses know that they receive referrals few do much to systematically generate them. By that I mean making the generation of leads through referrals an integral part of their marketing. So how do you do that...first you make giving you high quality referrals easy. Show them how to do it. In fact, do it for them.

A financial advisor wants to do more business with individuals from a certain neighborhood so instead of - Do you know anyone to recommend to me? He says here is a list of your neighbors do you see anyone on this list that you could send this note to. Different isn't it.

Think referral system and make it part of how you do business. Make referrals a condition of doing business with you. A dentist only takes on new clients that come to him by way of referral. Each new client also agrees to refer two more customers within the first 6 months. He charges 30% more than the average for his services.

Offer your clients discounts for referring new business. Even pay for referrals. It is the most cost effective marketing you can do.

Best of all if you build an effective referral system you will never cold call again.

Using Direct Mail To Build Business

By Janet Attard

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The US Postal service, which delivers 182 billion pieces of mail annually, estimates that one type of business mail alone -- bulk business mail -- accounts for 55 to 60 percent of its revenue.

Much of that bulk mail is made up of catalogs, advertising circulars and direct mail campaigns sent out by experienced direct mailers who know from years of experience that direct mail gives them the best bang for their advertising bucks.

Small businesses that attempt to do bulk mailings are often disappointed, however. Despite the relatively low cost-per-contact associated with direct mail, small and home businesses often get dismal results when they attempt to do large mailings. If you find yourself in that position, these strategies will help you get maximum mileage from the money you spend on mailings.

Don't do a large mass mailing if you have a micro-sized budget

Don't assume a single mass mailing will bring a flood of business to your door. Usually it won't.

A chiropractor located near Chicago learned that the hard way. He wanted to jump-start his new practice, so he spent several thousand dollars to create, print and mail a brochure extolling the benefits of chiropractic and offering a free spinal examination. The flier was mailed to 5,000 homeowners within driving distance of his office. To his dismay he got only 5 inquiries from the mailing, and only one of those actually came in for the free examination.

The chiropractor's experience is unfortunately common. Loosely targeted bulk mailings simply don't work for most small business. Residential mailings often bring only a 1/10th of a percent response rate (1 in 1000). Work out the numbers before you do a mailing. If your total cost for the mailing (list rental, postage, printing) comes to \$1.00 per name and if your mailing produces 5 new customers, each customer will need to spend \$1,000 before you break even. If you get 5 inquiries and only one becomes a customer, that one customer would need to spend \$5,000 just for you to break even on the cost of the mailing.

Focus on the three Ms when using the mail to market your product or service

There are a wide range of factors that ultimately effect the response you get from mailings. But underlying them all are the three Ms of success mail marketing:

The Market – the number of identifiable people who need or desire the product or service enough to be willing to make a purchase

The Message – The words and images and special offers used to get attention and get customers to take action now

The Mailing List – The actual people who receive a mailing and how closely those people match up to the types of people who are known to have a need or desire for the product or service.

Where small businesses usually go wrong is by failing to get those three Ms in sync. To get good results from a mailing, you need to send a compelling message to a carefully selected list of people who are likely to need or desire your product or service and have the means to acquire it now.

Test every element of your mailing before doing a large mailing

Don't even consider sending bulk mail until you have done a series of smaller mailings to determine the effectiveness of your mailing piece and your mailing list.

Test a mailing list before you send out a large mailing to determine how current the names on the list are and how responsive the list will be. To test a list, ask the list broker for an Nth name selection. This is the term used in the mailing list industry to indicate names are selected on a fractional basis, (every nth name in the master list is selected.). This gives you a random selection of names that will most accurately reflect what the response rate will be if you mail to the entire list.

If the mailing doesn't get much response and the addresses were deliverable, change your headline or your offer and do another small mailing. See how the response compares. Keep testing with small samples until you have a good handle on what copy, offers and lists work best for you.

Note: test only one thing at a time. If you make two or more changes and there is a difference in results, you won't know which change caused the difference.

Build your business with small mailings to a hand-picked list of prospects

Instead of a mass mailing, send very small mailings to a list of hand-chosen individuals who are likely to have an interest in what you sell. These individuals may be promising new prospects, or existing customers who you expect to make additional purchases. The more closely your sales offer matches their specific interests,

the better your response rate will be. For instance, if you own a pet store, a mailing announcing a sale on scratching posts for cats will get a much higher response rate if you send it only to cat owners than it will if you send it to all pet owners. In fact, highly targeted mailings often have a response rate of 2 to 3% (or higher for mailing to existing satisfied customers).

Create your mailing with a specific objective in mind

Many mailing fail because the mailing doesn't make it clear what the recipient should do after reading the mailing piece. They either don't tell the reader to take action, or suggest too many different things for the reader to do. To make your mailing profitable, have one specific objective in mind and build the mailing piece around that one objective. Some examples are:

- * Get the customer to place an order
- * Get the customer to visit your store or office
- * Promote an inventory clearance sale
- * Get leads for a sales staff to pursue
- * Get customers to call for information about consulting or other services
- * Get the customer or patient to make an appointment for routine maintenance or annual checkup
- * Create name recognition
- * Ask the customer for referrals
- * Ask for testimonials
- * Announce the relocation of an office or and/or a phone number change.

Before you send the mailing off to be printed give the text to several people who will be totally honest and ask them to tell you what action the mailing piece is asking them to take.

Plan on repeated mailings to prospects

Don't stop at one mailing. Send mailings at monthly intervals to the same list of prospects even if they don't respond initially. The repetition will help build name recognition for you and increase the chances that your marketing materials will be on hand when the customer or prospect develops a need for what you sell.

How to Make Your Customers Crazy... About You! 5 steps to outstanding customer service

by Peggie Arvidson-Dailey

As a small business owner, you find yourself in the unusual position of being grateful for customers, but not giving much time to them unless you have to fix a problem.

If you're like me, in the early days of your business every client felt like your best friend and because you had relatively few of them, you lavished time and energy on each customer.

Twelve months later you rarely think about your customers except to send them invoices and confirm their reorders. You're not a bad person because of this! As your business grew so did the demands on your limited time and energy.

Does this sound familiar? Your days are spent in a whirl from your first breakfast meeting to your last networking event. In between you return phone calls, process orders, deliver your product or service, balance your books and put out fires, just to start over again the next day. Your customers are lost in the morass of e-mails and phone calls and you realize you haven't sent a thank you note since last Christmas.

There is a way to effectively build and maintain outstanding customer relationships and I want to share it with you. Following are five ridiculously easy steps you can take this month in a few hours to build your customer relationships.

1. Purchase or create a reliable customer database system. You can create a system using Microsoft® Excel, Outlook or even Word. You can purchase an easy-to-use program such as ACT! Or one developed specifically for your industry. Be sure to track the following information in addition to your customer's name, address, phone and e-mail:

1. Birthday
2. Other important dates (anniversary, company anniversary)
3. Hobbies or specific interests
4. Date of first purchase from you, and a running tab of additional purchases.

2. Use the database on a regular basis.

1. Set aside one hour each week and update the database. Use this time to add new names and information, delete clients that have left your service area, and edit any information that may have changed.

2. Send personal notes to clients who have milestones or important dates coming up. Spend 20 minutes on Monday morning to review your list for the next two weeks, or spend two hours each month to write notes for the upcoming thirty days.

3. Send thank-you notes to your clients on a regular basis. Put a system in place to remind you to send thank-you for your business cards or notes at least 4 times a year.

Bonus Tip #1: Keep a stash of your stamped, business stationery in your briefcase. After a networking event transfer the names and addresses from the business cards you collected to the envelopes. Write the note there and drop in the closest post-box or write a note on the back of the business card related to your conversation and stick it in the envelope so that you can complete your notes in one sitting back at the office or while you are watching TV.

3. Create a system using your calendar or electronic device to meet deadlines for writing, editing and sending your newsletter or e-zine. Your e-zine must be informative and address the specific needs or concerns of your customers. Many software and on-line companies exist to streamline this process, allowing you to write your letter well in advance of its 'send' date.

4. Create customer satisfaction systems and be sure to train your staff on the intricacies of applying them to your customers. Your systems are step-by-step guidelines that include each part of every customer interaction, from new customer inquiries to product satisfaction follow-up to customer complaints. When you provide consistent responses in every interaction, your customers believe in you as a reliable business that always provides what they expect.

5. Evaluate your customer base regularly. Give yourself at least two hours each quarter to look for changes in your customer's buying habits. Have some stopped purchasing from you? Have others bought less and less, but you've spent more time handling them than anyone else? Have other customers that you thought of as 'small' started spending more money with your company? Respond to each of these scenarios within 24 hours of the evaluation and you will not be surprised by lost revenue because your customers were too disinterested to tell you they were buying from someone else.

Bonus Tip #2: Some customers may not be worth the time you are spending. Don't be afraid to spend less time with a squeaky wheel that produces little revenue. Be gracious but firm when you state that you will need to spend more time on other areas of your business in order to consistently provide outstanding service for everyone. If the customer demands more than you are able or willing to give, you can politely recommend other companies that may suit his needs better. You'll be amazed at how much time this will free up!

Finally, remember building customer satisfaction is ultimately about the relationship you build with them. Set aside specific time each month to foster the relationship and you will have customers that are crazy! (About you).

Demystifying Prospecting by Adrian Miller

Prospecting for new business does not have to be a daunting experience. By following these simple "rules", success should be yours. But, no shortcuts. If you want to succeed, be honest with yourself, and follow these techniques closely.

- The voice mail message that you leave on a cold call must include a benefits statement. That means you must answer the age-old question that every prospect asks themselves when they hear a pitch..."what's in it for me!" If you do that, you'll increase your percentage of returned calls.
- You must speak slow enough for the prospect to accurately record your name and telephone number. The best way to do this....write down the number yourself when reciting it. If you can record it, so can the prospect.
- Yup...we all know the adage....features tell, benefits sell. Then how come so many of us still speak in terms of features and not benefits. The prospect doesn't care what your product or service does, they only care about what it does for them.
- Not everyone responds to the same benefit. Make certain that you open your sales presentation with a "general" benefit that appeals to all, or most, prospects. Then, probe for your prospect's "hot button."
- Don't expect prospects to listen to a monologue. After the opening benefits statement, "engage" the prospect with a question.
- The best questions to ask are open-ended. Closed-ended probes get a "yes," "no" response, or maybe a number. Open-ended probes encourage description, feelings and dialogue.
- Do not ask more than 2 questions in a row. If you do, you'll sound as if you are conducting an interrogation. Prioritize your probes carefully. You never know when the prospect is going to interrupt and stop you in your tracks.
- Try to overcome objections before they are raised. Proactively address prospects' points of concern and resistance. Don't back off from objections. While they are not the most pleasant part of the dialogue, they provide you with the opportunity to re-sell.
- The worst objection is the one that is unspoken.
- A request for literature is not a dead end. Do not automatically assume the prospect is a deadbeat. Agree with the prospect that you will send them literature. Tell them that in order to make certain you send the information that is most relevant to their needs, you need to ask some questions. Make certain that the questions will allow you to re-sell and close again. Ask the prospect exactly what they are looking to see in the brochure / literature. Perhaps you can tell / explain it right then.
- All prospects that request literature should get a return phone call. Probe and find the best time / day to callback. Send out literature within 24 hours. Better yet, ask if you can fax the literature.
- You won't make a sale, or get an appointment, unless you ask for it. Closing rids the prospect of uncertainty. Closing is a call to action. You have to close more than once on each call. Be prepared.

Make prospecting a commitment that can't be broken. Commit to a specific number of hours per week. Schedule the time (no cheating!)

Remember, in life you miss 100% of the shots you never take (thank you, Wayne Gretzky). The best time to start...NOW!

Advertising on a Very Small Budget (Compiled by Austin K. Pryor)

1. Networking - spread the word via friends, relatives, customers.
2. (Consider giving an incentive/discount for bringing in customers)
3. Post colorful, eye-catching fliers on every bulletin board in town- apartments, condos, businesses that allow it, etc.
4. Have the newspaper "fold in" your flier. (Some will do it reasonably, and will even print the flier at reduced cost over conventional printers)
5. Get labels from your Chamber of Commerce and make a mailing to their mail list.

6. If your area has weekly local newspapers, try small classified ads in them. The cost is much lower and frequently the exposure just as high.
7. Other low-cost advertising options include delivering flyers to homes in selected upbeat neighborhoods -- they can be inserted in doorknobs or mailbox grillwork.
8. Also business cards printed on refrigerator magnets. And the monthly publications of organizations such as the local computer society and the Chamber of Commerce sell ad space at much lower rates than city newspapers and have a selective audience.
9. From a top salesman, who called it "the rule of ten" - he swore that that's all he does to get clients. Pass out 10 business cards a day - 50 a week, take the weekend off unless you didn't meet your quota, and keep it up. Pass a card out to anyone who will take it. For every 100 business cards passed out, you will get a prospect (inquiry). For every 10 prospects, you will get a client. One out of every 10 clients will give you a referral. This technique works well for consulting and many other service businesses.
10. Develop a very select mailing list of people who know you or who have been clients/customers in the past. Send them a periodic letter with something interesting; perhaps a newspaper or magazine clipping; write a short, one page newsletter with little gems in it. The goal is to keep these potential customers thinking about you so that when they do need what you offer, they will think of you and not someone else. Include a response postcard with "more info on this topic if you want it." I kept 30 to 50 people on my mailing list when I was actively pursuing clients and these "eggs would periodically hatch." Collect email addresses of your site visitors with a "join my list" sign up on your web site. Then, easily create and send compelling email newsletters, promotions and announcements to keep them coming back.
11. Regular blind direct mail, even the best, is very expensive and if you are lucky enough to get a 1% response rate, you are doing extremely well. The exception is for people you know and you want them to keep you in mind should their situation change. Highly targeted email campaigns can also work. But be careful you don't get classed as "SPAM".
12. Finally, a simple INTERNET home page can be a useful "brochure" to which you can refer people. Actually selling via the Internet can involve a significant up-front investment to get a good page(s) and especially to maintain with all of the Search Engines.

Bigstep.com is an official SCORE alliance. (<http://go.bigstep.com>). It may be good for people that want to establish an e-commerce presence without spending much money. They help you design your web site, arrange a credit card merchant account and link your site with the major search engines. It's well worth a try.

Register.com

Research and register your website (domain) name; can do hosting and simple sites too.

www.register.com

The Key to Creating a Winning Marketing Message

Your marketing message is what grabs your prospect's attention, tells them how you can solve their problem, why they should trust you, and why they should choose to do business with you over and above any and all other choices they might have.

Your marketing message should "speak" to your prospect. This is done by appealing to your prospect's "hot buttons" or those sensitivities that trigger an emotional reaction. The following is a simple five-step method for creating your marketing message.

5 Steps to Creating Your Marketing Message

STEP 1 – Identify your target market.

The first step starts out by asking, "Who is my target market?" Once you have narrowed this down then it's easier to craft a message to that market.

Every successful business has a target market whether they know it or not. Even the local dry cleaner has a target market, which is probably all the professional people living within a five mile radius of their store.

STEP 2 – Identify the problems that your target market experiences.

The second step starts by asking, "What problems do my target market have and how does it make them feel?" Each market experiences its frustrations and pains. The secret to crafting a marketing message that will

make your market sit up and listen is to identify their problem and the pain and suffering they feel as a result of that problem.

Remember the old saying that goes, “People don’t care about you, until they know you care.” Identifying your market’s pain and suffering tells them that you understand and empathize with them.

STEP 3 – Present your solution to your market’s problem.

The third step starts by asking, “What is the solution that I have to offer my prospect?”

Present your solution as a simple cure for all the pain and suffering your market is feeling as a result of their problem. This step is important in that most people won’t lift a finger unless they feel an urgent excruciating pain.

Now, identify all the benefits of your solution and how those benefits will improve the life of your prospect and take away all their pain and anguish.

STEP 4 – Present the results you’ve produced for other people in the same situation.

The fourth step starts by asking, “What are the results that my solution has produced?”

It’s not enough just to tell people you have a solution; you have to prove to them that your solution works. And you can talk all day about how you solved this and that problem, but people are skeptical and don’t automatically believe you.

People will believe other people who are similar to them that have achieved positive results. In this step you’ll need to prove your results by giving testimonials from current and former customers and provide case studies of actual problems that were solved and the results that were achieved.

STEP 5 – Explain what makes you different from your competitors.

The fifth step starts by asking, “How am I different from my competitors?”

You need to communicate your differences!

Prospects are looking for you to communicate your differences. And those differences need to have perceived value to the prospect. It needs to be something they care about.

The Big Marketing Message Mistake

The biggest marketing message mistake that companies make is communicating “What-We-Do” instead of “What’s-In-It-For-Me.” If these were two radio channels (i.e. WWD vs. WIIFM), which one do you think your prospect would rather hear?

While you are transmitting on WWD, your prospect is looking for the WIIFM station. In order for your message to match your market you need to be broadcasting on WIIFM.

Conclusion

In this article I’ve shared with a simple formula for creating an effective marketing message. Your marketing message should be used in all your external communications. It starts with knowing the wants, fears, problems, and needs of your target market and ends by crafting a message that speaks to those problems in a compelling and believable way. The result is an irresistible message that makes your prospect want to know more.

6 Proven Methods for Getting a Flood of Referrals Without Asking by David Frey May 2003

Yes, I admit it – I hate asking for referrals – don’t you? Be honest. Doesn’t your heart start to pump faster and hands start to sweat even thinking about asking a customer for a referral? If you’re like me, you hate to impose on others. Asking for names of friends or family members almost makes you feel as though you’re selling a multi-level marketing opportunity.

Not to worry. There are many ways to get a continual stream of qualified referrals without having to go through the painful process of asking for referrals face-to-face. The secret to getting referrals without asking for them is to develop referral systems that do the asking for you. Here are six innovative systems for getting referrals without asking.

Referral System # 1

Make a list of people / businesses that sell complimentary products and services to your own product or service. If you sell athletic shoes your list might include health clubs, running clubs, basketball teams, or podiatrists. Now create a referral program that pays referral fees for people that are sent to you by your referral partners.

To make this system more effective, give your referral partners customized coupons, tickets, or cards that the referral brings with them to your business so that you can correctly track each referral source.

Referral System # 2

Approach charities in your local area to get a list of donors that already give to the charity. The United Way is a good place to start. Most United Way donors make advanced pledges or set goals to give a specified amount to the United Way.

Now approach the executive sponsor of the United Way donation drive and make a proposal. Propose that for every referral that is sent from their organization to your business, you will take a percentage of your sale and donate it to the United Way (or whatever charity they are affiliated with) in their name.

Referral System # 3

Local churches are always looking for innovative ways to raise money to sustain the programs they offer to their members. Most churches would be enthusiastic about the opportunity to receive a donation from you or your business.

Simply call up the ecclesiastical leader and ask if you can meet with him/her to talk about a potential fundraising activity. Propose that for every referral they send your way, you will donate a percentage of the sales to the church. In return, the church should agree to promote your business. This same referral tactic can be done with the booster clubs of local sports teams, Boy Scout troops and other organizations looking to raise money.

Referral System # 4

Most everyone has a barber or hairstylist they use on a frequent basis, especially if you have children. I don't know about you, but my barber always engages me in conversation during my haircut. And most barbers and hairstylists are very happy when you give them a \$2 - \$3 tip. Do you see where I'm going with this?

Why not approach the local barbers and hairstylists and offer them \$1 for every referral card they pass out to their customers. You might even motivate them to talk up your business by promising them a percentage of each sale that results from their referral.

Referral System # 5

The last referral system will not only bring you referrals, but will also create a lot of goodwill. I learned this tactic, strangely enough, by Princess Diana and a local real estate agent. When Princess Diana died a close associate of hers was interviewed and revealed that Diana always carried a set of "royal" thank you notes.

Every time she met with someone she would remember their names and as soon as she got in her car she would write a short thank you note to them. The people cherished the thank you notes they received from the Princess. After hearing that, I started to carry around my own box of thank you notes.

But here's what really will make this referral tactic take off. Not long ago I received an email from a subscriber to my Marketing Best Practices Newsletter that had this phrase under the man's signature:

By Referral Only

By Referral Only...means: We invest 100% of our time and energy to delivering first-class service to our clients. As a result, our valued clients, suppliers, and friends refer their family, friends and work associates to us for advice on buying or selling real estate. We're interested in building strong life long relationships one person at a time.

You see, its not enough to send a thank you note. People need to know that you want and appreciate their referrals. The phrase, in essence, answers the question, "What can you do for me in return for this nice thank you card?" Immediately, I had this phrase printed on the bottom of my thank you notes and my referrals took off.

*****A good reference book*****

The Small Business Marketing Bible, by David Frey

Do Customers Trust Your Web Site?

by Andrea Harris

<http://www.minerva-inc.com>

How often do you think about trust in terms of your web site? You think about the content you put on it, the look and feel, the quality of the messaging. But if visitors to your web site don't trust you, they won't become your customers.

Why has credibility become such a hot button for web site owners? In this case, the Web's best features are also its own worst enemy. The Web is an inexpensive, easy place to publish your content - and it levels the playing field between large and small enterprises. While this is good news for small businesses that don't have large marketing budgets, it's also good news for a sleazy, marginal business that wants your money. Any unqualified hack can acquire a stellar Web presence for just a few thousand dollars.

The smaller or less well-known your company, the more important it is to present a credible, trustworthy face. You don't have the benefit of a multimillion-dollar ad campaign or an already-established presence in the marketplace. If you want people to believe what they see on your site, you've got to give them good reasons - in fact, ten of them.

Summed up below in bold type are ten Guidelines for Web Credibility, which grew out of a project by the Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab. The guidelines are based on three years of research with more than 4,500 people, and the advice has proven to be sound. My comments follow.

1. **Make it easy to verify the accuracy of the information on your site.** Remember what they told you when you learned to write reports in middle school. Credit your sources. Link to them when you can. Show that you didn't "MSU," as we used to say in the large computer company where I once worked (the polite definition is "Make Stuff Up.")
2. **Show that there's a real organization behind your site.** Posting a physical address on your contact page goes a long way. So do photos of the management team. (It took me a long time to accept this for my own site, but I found that I wanted to see photos of people on other sites, so I caved in.)
3. **Highlight the expertise in your organization and in the content and services you provide.** Especially if you offer a service, such as consulting, you need to show customers that you are qualified and equipped to handle their needs. Your credentials and affiliations with respected organizations will show that you're solid and trustworthy. Show where you've been and what you've done.
4. **Show that honest and trustworthy people stand behind your site.** Many sites have a "Management Team" page in their "About Us" section. A local nonprofit land preservation organization has posted photos from a staff party on their web site. In the photos they're dressed to represent various decades - one male staffer wears a long blond wig and miniskirt. Now these are people you want to have fun with! Along with appropriate photos of people in canoes and on hiking trails, the page effectively conveys the friendly spirit of the organization. (And how can you not trust an organization that posts photos of employees in drag?)
5. **Make it easy to contact you.** Your phone, email address, and physical address should be easy to find. I'd like to add that you should reply promptly to any customer inquiries you receive. I left a Web-hosting provider that took days to answer support emails and never, ever answered the phone or returned calls (despite a lovely female voice on the voicemail system that assured me how much they cared). I'm convinced that a team of high school kids manage that company in between trips to the mall.
6. **Design your site so it looks professional (or is appropriate for your purpose).** If you wouldn't give a customer a photocopied, homemade brochure, don't show them an unprofessional web site. Put yourself in the hands of a professional Web designer who understands how to project the right image for business clients. Tie the look and feel into your printed materials to reinforce the consistency and impact of your brand.
7. **Make your site easy to use - and useful.** Easy-to-use sites allow readers to find the content (the useful content) they are seeking. Imagine traveling to a new city and renting a car on a dark, rainy night. You slide in behind the wheel and try to put the key in the ignition. But the ignition is not where it usually is; it's to the left of the steering wheel. Then you look for the windshield wipers, but their controls are on the ceiling. It takes you 15 minutes to get going. That's what it can be like trying to use a site that doesn't follow basic guidelines for usability. Don't be lured into showcasing your great Web design talents, only to create a beautiful site that's impossible to navigate.

Useful sites put the needs of the customer first. They anticipate what information the customer will be looking for and post appropriate content. How useful is a site whose home page is a lengthy animated flash image that shoves the company's logo and mission statement in your face? Not very. (But that "skip intro" link is VERY useful.)

8. Update your site's content often (at least show it's been reviewed recently). If that seminar or trade show has passed, remove it from your "Upcoming Events."

9. Use restraint with any promotional content (e.g., ads, offers). If you're not selling Ginsu® knives, don't act like you are. In-your-face promos are annoying and distract from your content. Make it too obvious that you want to sell something, and you'll put people on the defensive. Avoid pop-ups. I'm sure I'm not the only one who deletes them using peripheral vision, so I never have to really look at them.

10. Avoid errors of all types, no matter how small they seem. Typos and broken links show you're not in control. If you're window-shopping in a new neighborhood, are you going to step into a store if the windows are broken and the door is hanging off the hinges?

How to Profit from Networking **by Kelley Robertson**

Sales are frequently developed through the relationships we have created with other people. Networking functions provide the opportunity to expand our contact list, particularly when we create and nurture quality relationships. It is not enough to visit a networking group, talk to dozens of people and gather as many business cards possible. However, every networking function has tremendous potential for new business leads. Here are five strategies to make networking profitable:

1. Choose the right networking group or event. The best results come from attending the appropriate networking events for your particular industry. This should include trade shows, conferences, and associations dedicated to your type of business. For example, if your target market is a Fortune 500 company, it does not make sense to join a group whose primary membership consists of individual business owners. You can also participate in groups where your potential clients meet. A friend of mine helps people negotiate leases with their landlords. He joined the local franchise association because most franchisors lease their properties.

2. Focus on quality contacts versus quantity. Most people have experienced the person who, while talking to you, keeps his eyes roving around the room, seeking his next victim. This individual is more interested in passing out and collecting business cards than establishing a relationship. My approach is to make between two and five new contacts at each networking meeting I attend. Focus on the quality of the connection and people will become much more trusting of you.

3. Make a positive first impression. You have EXACTLY one opportunity to make a great first impression. Factors that influence this initial impact are your handshake, facial expressions, eye contact, interest in the other person and your overall attentiveness. Develop a great handshake, approach people with a natural, genuine smile and make good eye contact. Notice the color of the other person's eyes as you introduce yourself. Listen carefully to their name. If you don't hear them or understand exactly what they say, ask them to repeat it. Many people do not speak clearly or loudly enough and others are very nervous at networking events. Make a powerful impression by asking them what they do before talking about yourself or your business. As Stephen Covey states, "Seek first to understand and then to be understood." Comment on their business, ask them to elaborate, or have them explain something in more detail. As they continue, make sure you listen intently to what they tell you. Once you have demonstrated interest in someone else, they will – in most cases – become more interested in you. When that occurs, follow the step outline in the next point.

4. Be able to clearly state what you do. Develop a ten second introduction as well as a thirty second presentation. The introduction explains what you do and for whom. For example; "I work with boutique retailers to help them increase their sales and profits." This introduction should encourage the other person to ask for more information. When they do, you recite your thirty second presentation. "Bob Smith of High Profile Clothing wanted a program that would help his sales managers increase their sales. After working with them for six months we achieved a 21.5 percent increase in sales. Plus, sales of their premium line of ties have doubled in this time frame." As you can see, this gives an example of your work and the typical results you have help your clients achieve. Each of these introductions needs to be well-rehearsed so you can recite them at any time and under any circumstance. You must be genuine, authentic, and as I recently heard a speaker say, "bone-dry honest."

5. Follow up after the event. In my experience, most people drop the ball here. Yet the follow-up is the most important aspect of networking. There are two specific strategies to follow: First, immediately after the event – typically the next day – you should send a handwritten card to the people you met. Mention something from your conversation and express your interest to keep in contact. Always include a business card in your correspondence. Next, within two weeks, contact that person and arrange to meet for coffee or lunch. This will give you the opportunity to learn more about their business, the challenges they face, and how you could potentially help them. This is NOT a sales call – it is a relationship building meeting.

Networking does produce results. The more people know about you and your business, and the more they trust you, the greater the likelihood they will either work with you or refer someone else to you.

Kelley Robertson, President of the Robertson Training Group, works with businesses to help them drive sales, increase profits and motivate their employees. Receive a FREE copy of "100 Ways to Increase Your Sales" by subscribing to his 59-Second Tip, a free weekly e-zine @ <http://www.RobertsonTrainingGroup.com>.

Modern Marketing With Postcards by Bob Leduc

Postcards may be one of the best kept secrets of modern marketing. They produce even better results now than in the past. That's probably because postcards deliver information the way people want to get it today... fast and with little or no effort.

A brief captivating message on a postcard with an enticing offer sent to the right prospects will generate a flood of traffic to your website - or a large number of sales leads.

Keep your postcard simple. Make it look at first glance like a message from a friend instead of like an advertisement. This creates a pleasant emotional response from readers even though they quickly realize that it is a commercial message.

State the biggest benefit you offer to customers. Then briefly add a few other advantages or features you provide. End with a compelling reason for prospects to contact you... or to go to your website for more details. It's that simple.

Tip: Don't try to close sales directly from a postcard. There's not enough space on a postcard to provide all the information your prospects need to make a buying decision.

People Read Postcards

Almost everybody will read a postcard - even those who usually throw out other direct mail without opening it. That's because it's almost impossible to throw out a postcard without looking at the message.

This high rate of readership is the main reason why postcards produce a bigger response than other types of direct marketing. With other types of marketing you often lose prospects who would have responded to your offer - but they never saw it.

Tip: Postcards are an excellent low-cost alternative to email. People get so much email today that even legitimate messages are getting deleted unread. But they get few if any postcards. Your message is guaranteed to get their attention when it's delivered on a postcard.

Postcards are Cheap to Produce

Postcards cost less than 2 cents each to produce if you print them using your own computer. You can print postcards individually on blank 4 x 6 inch index cards or print 4 postcards on 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of index card stock and cut each sheet into quarters.

Your postcards will cost between 4 cents and 9 cents each to produce if you use a commercial printer ...depending on the number you have printed and the quality you want.

Postcards are Cheap to Mail

Even the postage for mailing postcards is cheap - 23 cents each to send them by First Class Mail in the US. The only requirement for this special rate is that the dimensions of your postcards must be at least 3 1/2 x 5 inches but not over 4 1/4 x 6 inches.

Tip: Always use a real 23 cent stamp on your postcards. It produces more replies than a printed indicia (imprinted postage) ...probably because people associate a printed indicia with junk mail.

Don't overlook postcards the next time you want to drive a huge amount of traffic to your website or generate a flood of new sales leads. They're simple to use, highly effective and very low-cost.

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Referral Marketing is Target Marketing at Its Best
by John Jantsch Copyright 2005 John Jantsch

Most small business owners miss the boat when it comes to getting a constant flow of referrals because they start off looking in all the wrong places.

If they seek referrals at all, most small business owners think only of their clients. Now, your existing clients can be a good source of referrals. And when you think about it, who better to sing your praises than someone who has actually experienced your rare abilities.

The problem though is that your existing clients don't have much motivation. They may be in a position to send you referrals but they won't think of you day in and day out, and that's what your referral marketing effort really needs.

When it comes to figuring out a referral marketing system, the number one question you need to answer is this. Who is, or can be convinced to be, highly motivated to refer business to me.

When you look at it from that point of view you begin to realize that no matter who you approach you better be able to propose a motivation that has something in it for them.

In most cases, the best referral sources, those that can be motivated, are businesses like yours that sell to the same target market. These non-competing businesses should be looked at courted like one of your primary target market sectors.

Your marketing efforts should include very specific plans to attract, educate and motivate this target market. . . just as it would for the end user of your product or service.

The payoff with this kind of thinking is two-fold. I believe that almost any prospect that comes your way by way of a referral will generally be more qualified and likely a better fit. In addition, a highly targeted marketing effort pointed at referral sources can be one of the best ways to leverage your limited time and marketing dollars.

Properly marketed to, a good referral marketing partner could potentially send you handfuls of clients for about the same effort most businesses expend to land one self-generated client.

There can be many ways to motivate this type of referral lead source. You likely have something they want or can at least propose a way for them to get more of what they want. I'm afraid it's hard to say the same for your clients.

One of the best way to put this thinking on steroids is to think in terms of building your very own strategic referral partnership network. Try to fill every need your clients have by plugging in and referring members of your private network. If you do this, you will never need to search for business again.

This approach to referral marketing and the tools and tactics to put it into motion are fully detailed in *Referral Flood - How to Create a Flood of New Business Without Spending One Dime On Advertising*. If you want to uncover the insider's roadmap to generating referrals, this is the place.

John Jantsch is a marketing coach and the author of *Referral Flood - How to create a flood of new business without spending one dime on advertising*. You can get more information at www.ReferralFlood.com.

Finding More Business Increasing Sales & Profits

by Alan J. Zell

Every business needs more business. That's an accepted fact. The unaccepted fact is that most businesses don't use all the opportunities available that will bring them additional business. When one looks for additional business, the primary goal should center around getting "second sales."

"What are "second sales" and why are they important? Second sales are add-on sales, repeat sales and sale by referral. They are important because they are much less expensive to get than first sales. Yes, less expensive because the time and energy spent getting a first sale does not have to be made, and it is the money not spent that goes into profit (or profit that does not have to be spent).

Very few firms make a profit on first time sales. The cost associated with getting a first-time sale are far higher than the costs associated with making a second sale. Hence, second sales are profitable because the costs of getting the customer in the door and to buy are eliminated. This saving can be moved toward the "bottom line."

ADD-ONS can be when customers buy 2 or more things during the same time period. It could also relate to a situation where the customer is thinking about buying a \$10.00 item but buys a \$15.00 one instead; the extra \$5 is an add-on.

REPEATS are the goal for any business gaining "customer loyalty." While it is often spoken of, it often is not pursued.

The opportunity to create add-ons and repeat sales is often overlooked. The opportunity everyone should be aware of is ways to sell new ideas, services and/or products to old customers; sell old ideas, services and/or products to new customers; and sell old ideas, services and/or products to old customers.

Repeat customers can be an indication that, in these customers' minds, the firm sells good quality and value, and gives good service. This, then, very often leads to referrals.

REFERRALS are profitable because the person doing the referral offsets the need to spend marketing dollars to get the customer in the door and to buy. The term "referrals" has several meanings when it comes to second sales.

The first relates to products or services a customer is considering or has purchased. When customers are proud to be associated with the product, salesperson or firm and they believe they can talk with confidence and intelligence about the product or service, they will talk about it at the first opportunity. Their telling about it may result in others coming in to see and, hopefully, buy it.

A second meaning is "word-of-mouth." This means asking people for a referral. Sometimes it can be done unobtrusively, other times it may take getting up enough nerve to come out and ask for it. In the selling business, the adage is "always ask for the sale." In the business of making second sales, the adage is "always ask for the referral."

The third source of referrals comes from the "awareness factor." The more people who know about the firm and what it sells, the better the chances are that when a discussion includes something related to what the business sells, those aware of these products or services will bring this information into the conversation.

There are many ways to segregate customers.

By Account Status: New Customers

- * Current Customers
- * Past Customers

By Use of Products/Services

- * Current Users of a Particular Product/Service
- * Researched Leads
- * Prospects

Customers in both of these categories have many aspects of their buying situations in common -- their buying situations. Each is a candidate for second sales, sales to go with their "buying situation" of what they:

- * are doing,
- * planning to do, or
- * would like to do

NEW CUSTOMERS: When one is talking to new customers, and to it is customary to be discussing a product or service that goes with something they are doing. That's why they come to you or allow you to do more than just into their environment.

However, these same customers have other buying situations in that there may be things to go with what is in the planning stage.

Additionally, everyone has things they would like to do should the opportunity to present itself. When you concentrate only on the current buying situation and do not try to ascertain if there are products or services to go with their other buying situations, you close the door on possible second sales.

CURRENT CUSTOMERS: They too, have the same three buying situations as new customers. So, while you are taking care of the current project, if you are listening closely, you may perceive an open door for either add-on or repeat sales.

PAST CUSTOMERS: Just because the project is over does not mean the door is closed for second sales. If while you are completing a current project your making an effort to find other things customers have in their plans or would like to do could mean that there would be no such thing as a past customer.

The other aspect of this is to get back to past customers whenever the firm has something new (idea, information, product or service) to offer. While it may not be for them, they may know of someone who could use it which could very well open the door to a new customer.

CURRENT USERS of a Particular Product/Service: The chances for getting additional business are open because they are "researched leads"(you know and maybe they know you have services they could use but you haven't come together yet) or "prospects"(you know/think they could use other products/services but they don't). By letting you in the door the first time they are, in some ways, giving you the key to their pocketbook -- repeat and add-on sales.

RESEARCHED LEADS: It is an oft-repeated saying that before contacting a prospect, research should be done on what the person or firm does or makes, where they are located, their sales/income levels, etc. But it should not stop there because no matter how much research is done, they are prospects for products or services that research doesn't expose.

PROSPECTS: Prospecting for customers has kept the advertising business healthy for years. It has been their key to vendors' pocketbooks because it takes repeated use of the media to move prospects to researched leads and researched leads to current users.

What can a firm do to open the door for second sales? It can use several different methods:

- * Provide customers with a menu of possible uses of the products and services the firm has to offer. The expression is: "If you want to sell the turkey that's in the refrigerator, you had better put turkey in all its various forms on the menu."
- * Get customers to talk about what they are doing, planning to do or would like to do. In business, talking about what the firm is doing, planning to do, or cannot find someone to do is a favorite pastime.
- * Always talk about the second sale while working on getting the first sale. Do not expect customers to know there is a second sale without being told.
- * Offer customers some choices of involvement, price, detail, time, etc. for accomplishing the same thing. When they consider buying a product/service, many firms refrain from buying the bottom or top of the line or service, usually they choose somewhere between the two, thus leaving the door open for add-on sales.
- * Ask your staff working on a project to be alert for additional products/services that can be add-ons or repeat business the firm might be able to provide. While they may not wish to be responsible for making the sale, they should be held responsible for bringing back the information that will lead to a second sale.
- * Ask current customers for the names of firms they believe have similar problems.
- * Discuss problems customers are having with vendors as they relate to the products/services your business has to offer.

The road to getting more second sales is when through their actions and efforts everyone in the firm asks New Customers, Current Customers, Past Customers, Current Users of a Particular Product/Service, Researched Leads and Prospects: "What Do You Need Me To Be?"

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Attract Clients With Your Business Card **by Bill Lampton, Ph.D.**

Let's say you attend a business function. You meet a top tier prospect, and give her your card. As you are driving home, you realize that twenty other people may have approached that prospect and presented their business cards. So what will make your card stand out from the collected stack?

Here are twelve ways to assure that prospects will read your card, and will become more likely to do business with you.

ONE: Keep your card "reader friendly" by providing ample white space. Unfortunately, we are tempted to jam as much information on the card as the printer can squeeze in.

However, people don't want to bog down by reading lengthy paragraphs. Note how short this one is, and the one before it. Easy to read, don't you think?

TWO: Display your photo on your card. Think what happens when the prospect you met at the reception flips through the cards she collected. Which people will she remember most easily? The ones with photos, of course. For many years, real estate pros have acted on this assumption, and they are right.

An important caution: Be sure to use a recent picture, no more than five years old. The person who uses an outdated picture raises suspicion. What else about them is obsolete or misrepresented?

NOTE: Recently I had a photographer take a new photo of me, which I will put on my business card and Web site soon.

THREE: Stick with a standard size. You want your card to fit the card collections others maintain. An odd-shaped card might be tossed away as too cumbersome to keep.

FOUR: Never economize on paper stock. The dollars you save won't compare with the dollars you will miss out on because prospects think you may be second rate, like your card.

FIVE: Spend what is needed to include color. Think about it-how many of your potential clients have black and white TV, cameras and magazines?

Avoid psychedelic colors unless you are a designer, artist or entertainer. Your color photo will reflect a warm, vivid personality, so there's no need to shock the senses of readers.

SIX: Include your slogan. My company slogan identifies my purpose: "Helping you finish in first place!" Six words are enough--if they are the right words.

SEVEN: If you have a logo, use it. Picture this in your mind: "Golden Arches." Know the product? I am sure you do. Did you salivate? Probably so. That's the power of symbols.

My logo is a winner's trophy, which fits my motto of helping organizations and individuals finish first. Matches my company name as well: Championship Communication.

EIGHT: Tell readers how to contact you by phone, fax, mail and Internet. This sounds elementary, yet you would be surprised at how many marketers omit this essential data.

NINE: Keep your card current, by printing new ones when you change your office location, phone number or e-mail address. When someone gives you a business card with a new number added in pen, you rate their work second class, or worse.

TEN: Use both sides of your card for information. No need to let half the space go unutilized.

Many professionals put their mission statement on the reverse side, and show it to prospects when they meet with them.

ELEVEN: When you give your card to a prospective client, don't offer just one. Instead, ask: "How many of these will you need, to share with your staff?"

You will be amazed at how many more cards you will put into circulation with this simple question.

TWELVE: You may want to distribute more than one card, with each card reflecting a different service you offer. Several years ago, a retired executive handed me three business cards, each representing a new venture he had launched, with distinct services offered.