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Chapter 12: The Role of Professionals in Your Marketing Campaign

Introduction:

The main intention behind this book is to explain to you the beauty of including promotional products in your marketing campaign. However rather than selling you the concept of promotional products itself, this book will serve you as a guide on how to go about marketing through the use of these products by providing you with explanations and examples in order to facilitate the advertisement of your products or services. Of course the ultimate goal of this book is to help you find different avenues as to how you can increase the percentage of sales of your business. Additionally, this book caters for both those business on a budget as well as for those businesses where money is not an issue but would still like to make their business more profitable.

Whether you decide to go for your marketing campaign all on your own or whether you want to ensure that you can understand the dynamics of how a professional marketing company works this book will guide you all the way.

In simple words, this is an easy to read and understandable book that will help you set up a financially rewarding promotional program.

Chapter 1: A Brief Summary of the Book

Once you have been through the chapters of this book you will start to realize the significant role promotional products play in your marketing campaign not to mention in the overall growth and stability of your business.

If you apply promotional products, regardless of what aspect of your business you are focusing on be it whether you are giving out promotional products to your existent or potential customers in your sales promotion, in training your employees and also in thanking them for their efforts, rewarding their participation as well as an employee's exemplary work ethic you will notice the large benefits that only using promotional products can bring to your business.

While the influence on the people who hold the promotional items is more effective than the normal methods of advertising, they also represent your business as more valuable one to your target market always as long as the promotional product you give them is useful to them.

If you look at the regular means of advertising you will notice that after a while the general public will forget about your advert or will remember it occasionally. With promotional products on the other hand, you have an item with all your information on it that constantly reminds your target audience about your business and what you do. On an even more positive note making use of promotional products is even more cost efficient than if you had to pay for the regular means of advertisement.

While this chapter is quite brief compared to the rest of the chapters contained in this book this chapter will encapsulate a short summary, and will even act as a crash course to you so that you can fully apply what you have learnt by applying the knowledge of this book to your business. So after you are done reading it, it is recommended that you re-read this chapter once again.

In brief your marketing campaign should more or less follow the steps below:

Step 1: Know what makes and breaks a business. While it is not possible to prevent every business failure, it is possible to take the necessary steps that allows you to fall on a safety net when all else goes wrong.

Step 2: Write a detailed marketing plan that can fully support your business objectives.

Step 3: Advertise your business through sequential marketing such as mail and emails. Use first time purchase programs or introductory product incentives, make use of current market news, advertise special offers and never miss out on holidays as these are a nice way to remind potential customers as well as current customers about your business. Combine these marketing steps with promotional products.

Step 3: Make use of sales promotions especially if you want to increase your customers' database, launch a new product on the market and deplete old or unpopular stock. Come up with bulk orders, referral programs and first time purchase incentives. Again, the use of promotional products that are related to the offer is highly recommended.

Step 4: Your public relations are vital to the success of your business. Therefore, you need to get your business more involved with your community by sponsoring events such as charity, health, social, athletic, political, educational, and neighborhood safety causes. Again the more promotional products you pass on the more your business becomes known to the public.

Step 5: Try to attend a few trade shows and make your business known to other people by properly designing booths and displays which also includes the decor. At these shows also make use games, exhibitions, demonstrations, pre-show invitations through mail or other means. Always have plenty of give-aways and gifts that are not so commonly given out for free. These gifts and free give-aways will act as your promotional products. Always follow up your trade show performance by a thank you note together with other promotional literature that keeps marketing your business, by delivering ordered products, and by organizing a get together both for your trade show visitors as well as for the employees who participated in it.

Step 6: Always remember to invest in your staff by training and motivating them as this will help improve their morale and overall performance. It will also show them that you acknowledge their input into your business by giving them recognition awards and running constant competitions to increase their performance and motivation. It will also help build a sense of team spirit within your workforce. Promotional products of a higher value than the ones you give to customers are usually the right way to proceed when dealing with your employees.

If you think about the benefits that the use of promotional products have to offer you in your marketing campaign and if you actually put them to use starting from today you will be amazed at how you can shake your business from one that was struggling to a growing one. As you can see from the brief description of each of the steps above, promotional products were included at every stage of your marketing plan. Regardless of the occasion, promotional products will work wonders for you. So are you ready to shake your business up and make it more profitable?

Chapter 2: A brief Explanation as to why businesses are not successful

Apart from the importance of location and funding of a business, one can find a variety of other reasons that may lead to an unsuccessful business.

Failure to diversify

Whereas in older times, there was a lower selection of products and services available to the public and despite the fact that it was possible for a particular trader to hold a certain control over the market, this idea has become somewhat out of fashion. What does this mean for you?

It means that you can no longer sit back and continue to use the same business practices time and time again. If you have worked towards establishing a good market name for your products or services, you cannot always rely on that business tactic which worked.

Truth is with the new emerging businesses, a phenomenon that practically happen every day, you cannot rely on that which you have already achieved. You will need to diversify your business and this will in turn reduce the risks of losing your business. Instead, it will increase your sales since your products or services will be widespread and if one or more of them are not on demand at a given point in time, the other products or services that are on demand will aid your business generate income in times of need.

Imagine that you deal in dairy products and the market is currently low on milk which is the main ingredient and component of dairy products. What will you do? Will you close down your business or will you have other products or services to sell? Diversification does not necessarily mean that your business will not fail but it rather means that you have taken great precaution in calculating your potential market risks. This implies that you need to learn to adapt to the ever changing needs of society and the flow of the market at large. Thus, you should focus on increasing and expanding your business. This, however, does not mean copying other competitors.

Ensuring that your business covers a vast range of products and services implies the need to look at connecting and ancillary business activities that you can rely on when things in the economy at large and particularly in your target market do not go as planned.

Debt and Amicable Agreement

When your business is facing a financial crisis, it is easy to declare it quits. However, it is of high importance that instead of filing for bankruptcy procedures you try to reach an amicable agreement that discusses a revised payment plan with your creditors first. This is not only a way to ensure that you pay all the debts owed by your business but it will also allow you to keep

your business running a bit longer to test the waters until you are in a position to decide whether it is feasible or not to continue to operate your business.

Use Professional Feedback

When most businesses are struggling they start taking measures that may hurt rather than assist in their business growth. It would be a proper business conduct if you ask the advice of experts such as accountants and legal experts as well as marketing pros that can help you cut on costs, know your rights and grants available as well as increase your sales.

An accountant can for example take a look at your financial statements and point you towards some unnecessary costs that you have been enduring throughout the operation of your business. At this stage it would be wise to cut on these costs. An attorney could assist you in applying for grants and could also explain to you the pros and cons of undergoing bankruptcy procedures. Attorneys can also advise you on steps that you can take in relation to your creditors including your financial provider. A marketing expert can on the other hand help you attract more business traffic to your doorstep.

Ideally, the feedback of these professional advisors is sought way before your business goes haywire. It is important to note that although these professionals may assist you, they may not always have all the answers that you need to save your business. Additionally, asking for professional advice is itself a pricey business choice and that is why it is an expense that is best incurred when your business is still fluid.

Follow up

It is surprising that many businessmen out there go to great lengths to organize and promote their company. However, when a prospect presents itself most businesses fail to take the necessary action to turn the prospect to an actual paying client. This for you means nothing more than a missed opportunity to increase the revenue of your business.

As will be discussed in this book, it is of utmost importance that you follow up your activities. For example, let's say that you went to a trade fair and have invested a large amount of cash for your stand and in promotional products to give away to potential customers. You ask the customers to give you their contact details in return for the promotional product but once the trade fair is over you fail to follow them up by means of a phone call, emails or letters.

While it is true as will be shown in this book that promotional products act like a constant repetition to your prospects that your business exists and that they got the product from you, you will need to learn to do some of the shaking up yourself to turn your prospects in to customers. Likewise, current customers need to be reminded that you have something to offer

them. They need to feel appreciated. So when following up your clients' database, you also need to take existent customers especially if you have special offers they can benefit from.

In short, failing to follow up your activities, promises and targeted actions can be seen as a missed opportunity to make your business more liquid.

Failure to Market

As will be demonstrated throughout this book, marketing assumes a very important role if you want to grow your business. Marketing helps you establish a name for your business with the general public. Marketing is a useful tool to establish a brand. Any big company has learnt that marketing is the way forward if they want to grow and survive in this ever dynamic and unstable economy.

This book will show you how to make the most of your marketing plan by means of planning, classification as well as by using promotional products which have the ultimate effect of reminding your customers that you are there as well as of providing them with handy information that allows them to contact you.

Conclusion

Sometimes, business failure is the result of lack of proper planning and of failure to put your products and services out there. This book will show you how to create a presence among your target market so that you can attract more traffic to your business.

Chapter 3: Satisfying the Need of Customers

A promotional campaign starts off as a state of mind. You want to double check with yourself whether deep down you realize that people need your products and services. This is because you need to vibrate to your customers the feeling that you are doing them something good. You are indeed giving them a helping hand because your products or services will satisfy a need your customers have. So take a deep breath and take some time to admit to yourself that both your existent as well as potential customers **NEED YOU!**

Do not start on a marketing campaign thinking that you are going to bother the people out there. The very reason for this is that these very people need the products or services that you have to offer. After all we would not be aware of the wide spread consumer selection both locally and internationally without the use of advertisement. If there was no advertising in the world would you know that a discount store has opened or would you be aware of the latest technology gadgets, low interest rates that are being provided by certain financial services providers or better yet how would you get different quotes for your bathroom had different businesses decided to advertise themselves? If you stop to think for one second we are thankful for the availability of all the products or services information out there. So, yes you are indeed doing your prospects a favor by embarking on this marketing campaign.

You are in fact helping people by providing information about your products or services so that they do not have to waste time looking for them when the need arises. On a more positive note if you add promotional products to this information you will constantly remind them where and who to look for when they need the type of services or products that you have to offer.

Truth is told most letters or leaflets are thrown away easily but people don't throw away things that they can use and this is why it is important to use promotional products. Again you are doing them a favor by making it easier for them to find your contact information. Your business name is chanted to them when they are having a cup of tea and are drinking from the mug that you have made available for them. You refresh their memory about where to find your products or services as they proceed to jot down important events on the diary or calendar that you have gifted them with. It is in this way that promotional products out do the ordinary newspaper adverts – because they reach a wider audience than a newspaper add would. Promotional products are effective because the number of times that your business name is viewed is increased tenfold!

Chapter 4: Your Role in Marketing

When you are running a business, your main intention is to generate as much profit as you can. The way to do this is to put your business in the way of as many people as possible. After all, it is these very same people who will pay for your goods or services and eventually generate for you a profitable income. Thus, the word '*people*' is a fundamental key element if you want to ensure for yourself a successful business activity.

The question is how can you make as many people as possible know about your business in an attempt to make them potential customers and eventually satisfied customers who will invest their money in to your business? The only plausible answer is the 'marketing of your business.'

What is marketing?

There are many definitions of the concept of marketing out there but they all more or less signify the same thing. Basically, *marketing* is a sales' strategy in which you go through the process of determining which products and services will be interesting to customers. Thus, in simple words, marketing assists you in developing your business by helping you establish a client business relationship.

What is your role in Marketing?

In order to ensure that your business as well as your profitable income grows, you will need to employ an efficient marketing plan.

An efficient plan is one that does not simply follow what the rest of the crowd in your line of business is doing. Even though a particular and popular marketing trend in your line of business may be the first step for you to market your business, this on its own is usually not enough. Simply sticking to common marketing schemes is the reason why most businesses do not attract as many customers as they originally had in mind. Drafting a good marketing plan implies that you will have more than an added database of customers but it also means that you are able to control the amount of cash spent on marketing and promotion. Rather than being taken by the marketing wave, you will ride your own surfing board and be in control of how much you want to spend allowing you to be flexible enough should there be a sudden change in the response to your marketing plan.

Take adverts in newspapers and commercial on radios as an example. Most businesses, unfortunately and unknowingly believe that this kind of publicity is the peak of their marketing campaign and they stop at that. But it is *NOT*. Despite the fact that placing adverts on the newspaper can draw traffic of customers your way, this simply is *NOT enough*. Even if you have

used the most attractive spot in the newspaper your marketing plan cannot simply stop at that. This is because you will be missing on a large sector of potential clientele; and remember your main interest is to attract as many people as possible to your business.

Few business persons out there are aware that a large sector of society does not read newspapers or listen to the radio or it simply does not have the time to do these activities anymore. Just because life in our society has become so fast and hectic, your plan of attack has to be on the same speed frequency.

Additionally you want to attract new customers and not simply rely on the ones you already have. Chances are that the ones you already have came to you because of the marketing strategies you have already applied and now is the time to expand the market of your customers by using new marketing strategies.

Your marketing plan should be flexible

While it is true that you need to plan ahead to provide yourself with a solid marketing strategy, you need to allow and be ready to accept that some changes might be needed to your marketing plan somewhere down the line of implementation. It is best that you look at these changes as adjustments needed so that your business gets more out of your marketing plan.

Your plan might need changing because it has deviated away from your business goals or perhaps just because you decided to trim the costs of your marketing campaign. There is nothing wrong with that as long as your marketing plan directs your business to new potential customers.

The backbone structure of every marketing plan

Even if you should allow your marketing strategy to be adjusted along the way, there are certain points that should always be present regardless of the changes that take place in any marketing plan. These points would include:

1. **The status quo of your business and the market within which it operates:** This involves information about where is your business now? How is it doing? Good? Could it do better? What is not working? You will need to assess the answers to these questions against an up to date research carried out in relation to the latest behavior of marketing habits within the industry or market sector that you are operating in. At this stage you should also look at where your business stands as opposed to others competing in the same market as yours and also important is a thorough study of consumer behavior.

Additionally, you also need to determine your target market. Since you need to become aware of your clients' likes, dislikes and overall habit patterns and because obtaining this information is quite a big project, you need to take the definition of your target market seriously. The study of the industry behavior you operate in, including performance in history up to the latest statistics, are the best points of references to obtain this information. First of all your target market would include those customers who are most likely to want to buy your products or use your services. Thus, for example if you are operating a lingerie business you can narrow down your target market to women. Therefore, the sex of your main clientele is one fundamental aspect that you should take into consideration. Next determine which age group of women might be interested in your products or services. Other things you should also take into account when determining your target market are their social standing, their status including their profession and education as well as their income brackets and the place where they reside.

At this stage, you need not be concerned with attracting other types of customers so you will be able to shift your focus when your business becomes a profitable activity. For now, focus on determining a specific target market. To gather sufficient data that is required for this purpose you can prepare questionnaires; ask for customer's feedback either through a tick in the box leaflet or by simple communication with them. If you cannot carry out this study on your own, you can turn to professional consultants. However, keep in mind that other cheaper solutions that perhaps reap more effective results may be available at hand such as online information, census or free reports conducted by local authorities, agencies or companies who somehow deal with the industry that you want to launch your business in. Getting these free reports and insider information may require your membership in entrepreneur chambers and other entities that are vested with authority and are governmentally backed up to assist businesses in general.

Some tips that could assist you in understanding your target market is determining whether your target market is classified as a busy with little time on their hands or conversely usually have a lot of free time to spare. Are they the type of people willing to listen and are they usually the responsible type to follow up your offer or do you need to chase them to remind them of what you have to offer? Is the description of your target market such that you know they have a huge potential of becoming your clients? What type of people or specific percentage of your target market will equal a waste of time if you try to engage in a consumer-business relationship with? Are the people you

have in mind usually skeptical of advertisements, sales agents and special offers? Is your target market educated, earns a high/low income and does it have trust issues?

These are examples of many questions that you need to ask yourself and then proceed to find the answer to. How can this be done? Have a look at statistics and do analyze their profile description in order to classify your target market in a much better way. For example, imagine selling baby stuff. Parenthood is common to both low and high earning sectors of society. However, while the high earning sector of your target market might be suspicious and also have a little time available the low income sector might for instance have more time on their hand because they are busy looking after their children since they cannot afford to send their child to a child care facility. If you take this as an example of how to classify your target market, you will then be able to adapt your marketing campaign to the different sectors of your target market.

A bit more effort is required if you intend on trading internationally. Launching a product for the first time and on a large scale like this requires an in-depth research of the different markets your products will be circulated in. For large scale products you should make a little investment in companies that can assist you in gathering the necessary market research. Focus groups are one such way this type of research is carried out but they would require some kind of compensation which varies from products all the way to monetary payments. Around twelve people fitting the same criteria of your target market will generally participate in each focus group. The feedback received from these focus groups is more than rewarding for your business as you will have a strong idea of clients' expectations, you will get more details in their replies and some concepts or issues that you may not have considered before are most likely to crop up.

Communicating through telephone, email or relying on the traditional postal service is both fast and efficient if you decide to go for surveys, questionnaires or focus groups. Once more you will need to decide whether you and your staff will be working on the formulation, circulation and data collection of questionnaires or whether you will be leaving this in the hands of professional research companies. Your decision will depend on your budget, human resources (how many people or staff is willing to assist you in this and how much will this cost you?) and what is your available time?

Before embarking on a survey, you need to have the following issues under control:

- Come up with simple questions for your questionnaire;

- From these questions you should be able to obtain specific information;
- You must ensure that the questionnaires, emails and any other communication are passed on to people who could be potential customers. This part is a key element to the success of your service as it will provide with relevant information as opposed to that data which is not. However, there is a lot you can still do with information you are not sure about and this includes online marketing and increasing online traffic to your business website such as through the tactic of lead generation;
- You must have a backup plan with regards to participation and this falls in to two stages: (1) Do not simply send your questionnaire to a few people. If you need the opinion and views of fifty people promote your survey to 150 people or more as lack of participation is usually the problem in these cases; (2) Promote your survey by rewarding participants with vouchers, cash, products and anything that would make people participate more out there. Passing on rewards using your own products could be in itself a free advertisement campaign of your business.

Although the following must necessarily be elements that you take into consideration in your marketing plan, it is important to note that the formulation of the points below are highly dependent on the information gathered from step one, that is, the market research carried out. Consequently, the more accurate and correct the information gathered, the more likely it is for your business plan to reflect a real picture of what you are dealing with in the market within which you want to operate your business. Inaccurate and incorrect information on a large scale might prove to be disastrous to your business strategy.

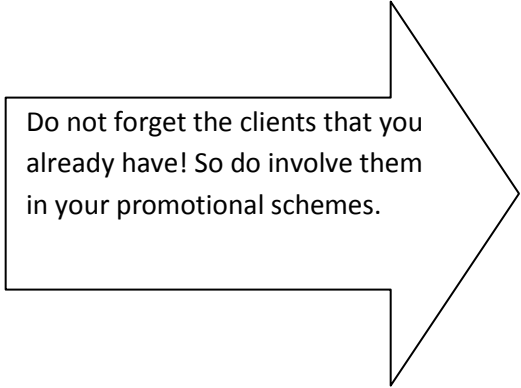
2. **The SWOT analysis:** Here you write down the (S)trengths, (W)eaknesses, (O)pportunities and (T)hreats that your business is facing depending on the outcome of your market research. Hence, in any survey or other research method carried out, one of the things to look for is the perception that potential clients have of competing businesses. Do not only look out for your competitors good points but also look for their weaknesses as you can use the negative criticism of your competitors as opportunities by making sure you do not make their same mistake and also by providing a solution for the problem the potential customers in your industry are facing; thereby having the opportunity to attract them to your business. The SWOT analysis should mainly focus on your business position and should therefore target your internal strengths and weaknesses.

3. **Competitors' assessment:** You need to write down those businesses that are competing against your own business. You only need to pick a handful and write a few brief points about their own strengths and weaknesses but do not over obsess. Assessing your competitors' marketing strategy requires periodical reviews and documentation. Keep track of how often they advertise their products or services and study the different methods they use such as promotions, discount offers, pricing techniques and even pay close attention to sponsorships. At this stage you are also to assess what makes you and your competitors similar and different. Ask yourself what is the strongest feature that makes your business stand out from your competitors. When carrying out this comparative analysis take a look at your competitors' policies including the quality and pricing of their products, guarantee, and customer satisfaction and delivery policies. Compare the outcome of the competitors' assessment with the internal assessment of your business. The end result should provide you with reasons that you will use in your marketing campaign, thereby promoting how your business is better than that of your competitors. At this stage it is important that you are objective and true to yourself about how well your business stands against that of your competitors. You will then be able to use this objective analysis in your marketing campaign.
4. **Your business objectives:** What do you want out of your business? What can you achieve? It is important that at this stage you write down objectives and goals that you can somehow measure. These involve different marketing steps that together lead you to achieve your business objectives. Both short-term and long-term goals fall within this category and you need to be very precise with what your goals consist of. Thus, if for example, you want to increase the number of customers for your business, you should jot down exactly the percentage by how much you want to increase it and within what time. Being precise by determining exactly what end results you want to achieve when you set down to setting your goals is exactly what makes your objectives measurable. Being specific also allows you to come to terms with your weaknesses and to possibly address them.
5. **The strategy you want to use to market your products or services:** This step like all other steps needs to be constantly monitored and adapted to the changes in the market behavior including that of your competitors and pricing. This is the part where you plan how you are going to market your business and where you choose the tools that will enable you to reach your objectives as explained in the step before. This would therefore involve a description of your products, an analysis of the pricing policy you want to adapt and the location of your business. Focus on the strengths and best features of your products, the location of your business and explain why customers

would want to purchase them. For example, talk about the points that make your product better than that of your competitors, explain the ease of access to your place of business (parking space, accessible by public transport or the availability of slopes and restrooms for people with special needs, babies and children). Move on to discuss the service and why it is a reputable, safe area. Thinking in advance about what criteria and features your customers would desire to have from your products is fundamental. The trick is to put yourself in your customers' shoes. Looking at your business from your clients' point of view involves also disclosing any difficulties your customers may encounter such as walking distance, the fact of having to take a flight of stairs before accessing your place of business and parking limits.

From the market the study carried out above, you will also be able to price your products according to the average standards of your competitors. Pricing, of course depends on the target market sector that you have determined in step one. However, if you intend to target high earning professionals you should look at your competition average pricing in this regards. The opposite is true if your target market is that for people on a budget.

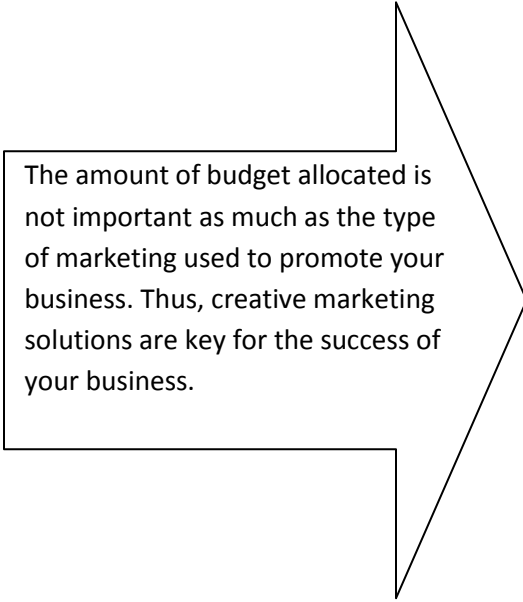
- 6. The line of action to take:** This involves planning the marketing strategy which should also take into account the generation of profits, the attraction of new customers. This stage also requires fixed timings in which you plan to achieve certain objectives. All the information that you obtained in the abovementioned steps will be used to implement your plan of action. Your plan should be written down and all the steps mentioned above to this information and objectives



Do not forget the clients that you already have! So do involve them in your promotional schemes.

- 7. Finances available:** The amount of finances available is important as this will determine the line of action your marketing plan will involve. The percentage of the budget used to implement different aspects of a marketing plan will depend on your financial means

and ambitions. This is one area in which businesses vary greatly. However, the initial marketing budget amounts to an average of 50 % of the sales made for the initial years and this percentage is phased out gradually as the business starts to grow and more people become aware of the existence of your business and what products you have to offer.



The amount of budget allocated is not important as much as the type of marketing used to promote your business. Thus, creative marketing solutions are key for the success of your business.

You can also come up with a financial planning scheme whereby you use your sales objectives' end results, that is, the profit emerging from planned sales, and plan to re-invest a percentage of it at a later stage as a planned budget. This is of course dependent on the actual number of sales achieved and this is why a marketing plan can be said to be flexible.

The marketing plan document

The marketing plan document should include all the steps mentioned above. It should also have step by step plans to reach both short-term and long-term objectives and it should include how these objectives can be achieved.

Thus, breaking it step by step into publicity, public speaking programs, charity promotional events, partnering events, promotional activities, joint venture marketing, referral marketing, internet marketing, advertising, customer market and other activities that you think would serve to make people know about your services or product is the core part of your business plan. All these steps need to have an established budget, time line and a determined amount of human resources that you would require to run these marketing schemes successfully.

Chapter 5: All about Promotional Products

Introduction

Regardless of how good or well priced your product is and despite of your target market, the key to a successful business is always that of promotion a fact which was also highly recognized by E. Jerome McCarthy.

Research in to the phenomenon of promotional items using businesses that did not use promotional items as opposed to those who did has positively concluded that promotional products not only increase your sales but also attract to your business repeat purchases. Moreover, providing your customers with promotional products creates in them a positive connotation to your business. A PPAI study showed that companies who rewarded their customers with promotional products provided a better review by thirty four percent to more to these businesses than businesses that failed to use promotional products. Another reason why promotional products are the highlight of your marketing campaign involves the fact that these will add to the impact of your advertising campaign itself as you are providing your ad viewers a desirable incentive when using your products or services.

As a business owner you can better understand the concept of promotion by taking a look at some of its examples. Among these examples you can find media coverage both printed and in broadcast form and other forms of public relations marketing, word of mouth, advertising and any other tool that serves to make your product known to people. More specifically, promotional items would take the form of trade shows, awards for employee service and internal promotions including employee events, gifts, business gifts, new customer recognition and customer referral incentives and fresh off the market products offers. If you are at a loss and don't know where to start from you can take your pick among the ten most effective promotional products which include: Calendars, tote bags, T-Shirts, Mouse pads, pens, caps and hats, mugs and cups, pens, jackets, golf and polo shirts, key tags and rings.

Advertising your business through promotional products

Once you have determined your marketing plan and strategy, You need to add incentives such as promotional products and offers to attract customers and make the most of your marketing plan. This clients' attraction technique is especially important to increase your clients' database. Apart from giving something in return for their custom, you should make the most of your promotional products by imprinting your logo, details or business name to the products you are giving your customers for free. Thus, you are to come up with promotional products that while showing the appreciation of your customers by for example adding a personal touch as *'thank you for your custom'* you can add *'from X (Name of business)'*. You are not only thanking your customers and providing them with a momentum of purchase from your

business but you are also marketing your business for *free since* the name of your business will be marketed for free by the use your customers make of your promotional products. This is how word of mouth usually works and this is why it is considered to be the best for of advertisement your business can have.

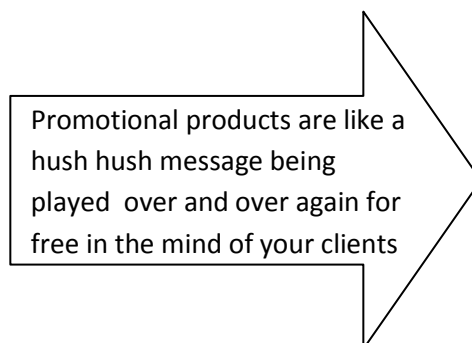
To encourage word of mouth you can make use of referral strategies whereby your clients get something in return for telling others about your business. Disclosing what items or rewards you are willing to reward your customers with will further encourage them to promote your business.

Since only your imagination is your limit you can choose whatever items you see fitting as your promotional items. Imagine mugs, kitchen utensils, desktop items such as pens, mouse pads and note books or diaries all the way to attaché cases, hats, flags glass coasters and more items can be displaying the name of your business while the promotional product is serving a purpose for your customers. An imprinted image or logo is most likely to stick in your customers' mind the more they are exposed to it. Marketing experts maintain that promotional items help your customers come back more than once and are likely to spend more than a business that does not make use of promotional items.

Promotional items also serve as ice breaker to introduce a new scheme to your clients. They, in fact facilitate the communication between you and a client who has already taken home a gift. Through promotional products you will also get to know what your customers look for depending on the promotional item they have chosen to take.

Most importantly, apart from leading to an increase in sales, promotional items also give your customers the idea of value because they have taken something else with them over and above the product or service they have already paid for.

Additionally, promotional products compliment other marketing techniques and advertisements that you have decided to invest in, thereby making your marketing plan more solid.



Promotional Products and your Target Market

It is highly suggested that when selecting your promotional product you should take into consideration the target market as specified in your marketing plan. For example, if your target market is the female audience then the promotional product should reflect something that females would like. Jewelry, clothing, business related items such as a keyboard shield or business card holders. Barbecues, watches, binoculars and tool kits are good examples of promotional items if your target market is the male audience.

Since your target market could also involve parents or new parents, children, teenagers, students, professionals, athletes, adventurous or bed ridden people, the low or high income earners or old people of society, you will need to think of items that could be useful for your specific target market.

A way to successfully select promotional products that are useful to your audience you need to decipher what interests your potential clients hold at heart. Understanding your target market's interests would therefore require some market research on your part and this includes the statistics that deal with what your target market purchases. When you take this research seriously you will uncover several common trends applicable to your target market. Consequently, bath products, diaper or baby item carriers as well as bibs, photo albums or frames could suit parents. Opt for toys such as Frisbees, balls, dolls, cars, bath toys, blocks, colors and coloring books or soft toys in the case your business is targeted at children. Cameras, CD racks, beach chairs, sunglasses, computer, car or desk accessories, cameras, calculators, stress relief books, fashion accessories and satchels are good promotional items when it comes to teenagers and students. Use clothing for any type of target market that you are dealing with and be creative; so do include the different seasons: Sweat shirts for autumn, bandanas, t-shirts and beach wear for summer, gloves for winter and sportswear such as caps are good examples of promotional items you can use. You will have to upgrade your promotional items if you are dealing with professional people. You can never go wrong with computer, car or desk supplies, calendars or planners, jewelry or watches, travel bags or stress relievers.

The above were a few examples of promotional items that you can use depending on the target market that you want to deal with in your business. Camping, sports or fishing equipment, flashlights, pens, utility tools and pen knives, water bottles, spa gifts or sponsoring some event tickets are more examples of promotional items you can use to market your services or products. The list is endless and your imagination and budget are key elements in deciding what promotional items you want to go for. Whatever promotional item you go for, your decision should always ask the question of whether that particular target market would want or whether it needs your promotional product. People advanced in age would not be inspired to

purchase your products or hire your services simply for the free video game voucher or a diaper bag gift as they are not as conversant with information technology and computer software as the younger generation is. This is why paying special attention to the needs, wants and behavior of your selected target market is of utmost importance before making an investment in promotional products. You don't want to throw away your money; you want to invest it so that your business is more profitable at the time of promotion.

The Scope behind Promotional Products

Basically, promotional products have one scope behind them: To help your business grow by bringing more awareness about the products or services that you have to offer. When it comes to promotional products you will need to make use of a product which will serve to promote your business, hence the derivation of the term *promotional products*. The good news is that you can pick any item, not being the product of your business, and turn it into a promotional product by imprinting your logo and other contact information on it or else by making use of a specific design that best serves to describe your business.

Because the main objective behind promotional products is to spread the name of your business and making it easily recognizable by people, it is of utmost importance that you include all your contact information on the item or items that you intend on using for your business promotion. This is mainly due to the fact that the underlying goal is to generate more sales as well as to provide a reminder to your existent clientele that you appreciate their custom and therefore instill in them a sense of loyalty towards your services or products.

Interestingly, promotional items also help you strengthen your employer relationship with your employees. Nothing can generate better work satisfaction than making your employees feel appreciated by providing them with a gift token for the services rendered to your business. On an even more positive note, if the promotional item chosen is of use to your customers and employees, your business' name is bound to be seen by more people than you have cared to provide a gift to. This is why promotional products out do traditional marketing campaigns as they are bound to reach more people and generate more positive results than the average marketing campaign would.

Various research has substantiated the believe that the use by a business of promotional products when compared to a business that does not offer any similar incentive to its clients will increase the customers' response rate to your business by eighteen percent¹. To demonstrate the boost promotional products will give to your business, imagine both your clients and employees taking the gift item at home. Their family members, friends and partners are more likely to become familiar with your products or services. Now imagine passing to your

¹ Look at the 2003 PPAI *Build Customer Goodwill with Promotional products Study* .

customers or employees a sun/screen shield for their car, a key chain or a mobile cover. When travelling from one place to another, your clients or employees would be running a free of charge marketing campaign for you while making people more aware of your business and what you do.

Back in 1998 ninety five percent (95%) of businesses interviewed were already making use of promotional products²; but the popularity of promotional products does not stop there: Over eighteen billion dollars were spent in 2005 just on marketing through promotional products. These statistics do nothing more than show that this marketing tool really works otherwise there would be no sense in spending so much in this area of marketing not to mention the establishment itself of the Promotional products Association International (PPAI). Moreover, an impressive seventy three percent out of the people who have received a promotional products claim to make use of your gifted item weekly while fifty percent of the respondents may find your promotional product useful daily.

And how long do your clients or potential customers keep your promotional item for? PPAI says that 22% keep promotional products for a month whereas fifty five percent of them keep it for longer than twelve months. Can you begin to think about the number of times, the holders of promotional items will view your business name and information? Yes, promotional products are priceless in your marketing campaign. The catch for promotional products to reap the desired rewards is that you select items that can be used and that are of a durable quality; after all, the longer your promotional item lasts the more free advertisement you are getting.

Promotional items work so well that it is quite possible that other businesses competing with yours are using promotional products to enhance their employees and customers' satisfaction experience. The items used for promotion by your competitors are something that you should closely examine. If your competitors are offering a mug or kitchen utensil when a certain amount of cash is spent on their products or services, you will need to go the extra mile to attract customers. If you offer the same package deal as your competitors, people will not bother to differentiate between your business and that of your competitors. Thus, you have to offer something more which gets customers to think about the added value of using your business as opposed to your competitors. Thus, instead of a mug offer a set of mugs or a tea set and instead of one kitchen utensil that can be cheap to purchase use desirable kitchen utensils or opt for a more valuable utensil or increase the quantity when running your sales promotion. This will make all the difference for customers to pick your business over that of your competitors. So give your customers a diary instead of a calendar, an electronic diary instead of a diary, a barbecue with utensils instead of a barbecue, a strong material ball instead of an inflatable one and a book instead of a magazine. You can also opt to give customers

² According to the Promotional products Association International (PPAI)

something that has nothing to do with what your competitors are offering and this would include an endless list of combinations. Let's say your competitors are either offering a mug, a video game or a calendar for the purchase over \$50 you can therefore offer them a sports jacket, custom-made limited edition cards or a barbeque for the purchase amounting to the same value of goods. The trick up the sleeve is offering something that is different or better than your competitors.

Coupons work less to generate your sales than promotional products the latter making customers spend by twenty seven percent more and an average of 140% more than those who merely received written information. Choosing the right promotional products for your sales promotion makes all the difference and your clients are likely to view your business as 52% better than the 16%³ positive feedback given in favor of other companies who simply provided promotional products without all the psychological effort to give their customers a promotional product that is right. Of course, whether your promotional product is more desirable than other promotional products still makes a huge return to your sales and your business approach and relationship with your customers is viewed from 16% to 52%⁴ higher than those businesses which fail to reward their clients with promotional products.

To start or in order to keep abreast of the latest promotional products' statistics and techniques you could also look for similar associations or groups in your vicinity and become a member since the pooling of information is an investment in itself.

Weigh Your Expenditure against Your Benefits

A rule of thumb when selecting promotional products is not to get carried away. You will need to look in to the costs of the promotional items and this should include the cost of delivery of the said promotional items. The idea behind promotional items is *not* to spend \$25 and get \$10 in return. On the contrary, promotional products should not only cover the initial cost to order them but they should return a high income reward for you. So before undertaking this part of your marketing campaign you need to sit down and estimate the average benefits that will come to your business as a result of using promotional products. If you want you can also ask for the opinion of your financial advisor.

One thing that you have to keep in mind is your objective –yes, the reason why you are undertaking this sales promotion should be kept at the forefront of your mind when weighing the cost against the advantages, especially at this stage. This is because it is one thing if your main objective is to get new clients to your business and another thing all together if your principle incentive is to increase your sales by a certain percentage. Let's say a new customer

³³ 1992 PPAI Study

⁴ 1992 PPAI Study

purchases a \$5 product from you and makes use of the sales promotional offer you have running at the moment. Your promotional item costs you \$8. Even though this does not seem to be a worthy venture when weighing your costs as opposed to the returns of this promotion you need to ask yourself about the objective which led you to undertake this sales promotion in the first place. If you wanted to attract a new customer, then the objective has been reached. If you wanted to attract a new customer and increase your sales, then your objective has not entirely been met as you have just gotten yourself a new customer but it costs you \$3 in return. You can either ensure that your sales promotion covers purchases of a certain value or you can appreciate that a new customer has made his way to your business. It has costs you \$3 this time but if your new customer returns than you have made a good investment as a returning customer is worth the promotional value invested in him.

Whatever your objective is, before launching your sales promotion you will need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of your promotion. This could also be a stage whereby you amend your initial objectives by refining them depending on how you verify what you can achieve through this sales promotion. Take some time to compare and contrast the sales before you launched your promotional products incentive. The only reasonable conclusion that you can draw from this exercise is that promotional products not only attract new customers but they motivate them to become regular ones. Hence, the investment made in promotional product will ultimately prove to you that this marketing scheme was worth your while.

Final considerations

If you want your marketing campaign to be successful you will need to ensure a solid relationship between your promotional strategy and the objectives laid down both in the initial marketing plan and also in each individual sales promotion. In fact you need to ascertain that these key points of your marketing plan coexist peacefully together in a way that they work hand in hand without conflicting with each other. To this peaceful balance you should also keep in mind all that you have learnt about promotional products. The promotional products should complement your products or services in such a way that they create a complete picture in the mind of customers or prospects and this picture should mainly send across to them the message of *added value* shopping. For instance, if you deal with house cleansing products giving a bucket for free with every two floor liquid products purchased will help your customers view the usefulness of the promotional incentive that you have created for them. You could also do it the other way round especially if you are promoting the sales of buckets rather than floor detergents.

Chapter 6: Advertising Basics

While advertising has many definitions, it is essentially a tool that enables you to inform people about your products or services. Advertising comes in different guises, yet the main idea behind each advertising category goes beyond simply informing people about your business; but it rather serves to instill the desire in people to purchase your products or try out your services.

One thing that is common to many definitions of advertising is the fact that it will include a paid form of communication about your business to the general public. An important principle when undertaking this venture is the need to allow time for your adverts to work. Since it is usually impossible for people to see each and every advertising effort on your part, you need to keep your advertising constant and you will reap the results as time goes along but remember that you will not see the results immediately.

Why go for advertising?

Many people have their doubts about using paid advertising thinking that it is enough to opt for other advertising options that come for free. While as the saying goes the more the merrier, making use of the real advertising has many benefits that if duly considered will leave you with no other option but to simply go for it. For example, advertising has the function of not only introducing your business to the general public but it will through constant reminders to the public create your very own business identity which the very same public will as time goes along easily identify itself with it. Additionally, besides showing the public that you are serious as making use of paid advertisements adds to the value of your business, you are also putting your business out there to attract more customers and investors.

Some other positive aspects of advertising would include the fact that it is quite a mechanical process and you will therefore have a strong element of control over it. If you pay for a newspaper article or a TV spot you will be informed of when and where as well as the time in which your advert will be issued or displayed to the public. However, it is not enough to have a time schedule for your ads. These ads need to be placed at specific times when your target audience is most likely to see them. This also means that you need to classify who your target market is.

Why not go for advertising?

Not every business is a fluid one, especially if you are just starting out or have had some economic challenges in the recent past. Thus, financing becomes a reason why some businesses do not go for paid advertising.

While it is true that advertising helps you build an identity for your business with which the public can identify itself with, you have to be aware that the results especially in monetary terms does not happen overnight. Indeed, an increase in sales and customers will still take its own natural course even if you are using advertising. Also, do not make the mistake of thinking that by obtaining finance to advertise your business it means that it is the solution for your current cash flow problems especially if your financial situation is very bad.

Bottom line, advertisement will help but you need to be patient and allow it to take its natural course. Moreover, if you opt for advertising then you need to have a strong knowhow of who your target market is and a study of their behavior including important aspects such as what time do they usually watch TV? This means that if for example your target market involves people who work office hours and you have booked a TV or radio spot, it would be more advantageous and more appropriate if you're TV or radio spot is made live within the first three hours after the average finishing time of office workers. You might need to pay for this kind of knowhow together with the design of your advert as well as the publishing advert itself.

Advertising tools

There are various advertising tools at the disposition of any business regardless of their budget. The list of advertising tools is endless. Some examples have been listed below so that you can get an idea of the different forms advertising comes in:

- Signage;
- Newspapers;
- Yellow pages;
- Radio;
- Bill boards;
- Yellow pages;
- Communal notice boards;
- Flyers;
- Letters (post);
- Television;
- Email;

- Banners;
- E-zines;
- Social networks; and
- Promotional products

Your Approach to advertising

Although the use of any of the abovementioned tools will aid to publicize your business how you approach advertising will make all the difference. An advert on the newspaper may reap a certain level of publicity but combining two or more advertising tools may take your sales to a whole new level.

But how do you determine your advertising approach? Now that you have gone meticulously through all the steps described in the marketing plan, you should have a line of action that you can follow up. The first thing that you should do is to take a look at your budget and target market. What advertising tools are within your budget but that at the same time can reach your target audience. Take some time to look up the companies or firms offering these services in order to obtain a quote for the use of a specific advertising tool and also to have an idea of how long your advert will run and what it is that you can expect to achieve by undertaking a particular advertising tool. How many people will it reach? What input is required on your part? How long before your advert commences to run? Ask the advertisement companies as many questions as you can so that you can make an informed decision prior to hiring their services. When communicating with advertising companies, you would be getting free knowledge and marketing education at the same time.

At this stage you either have the option to invest some of your time in understanding the dynamics and basic rules of advertising or else for a faster implementation of your marketing plan, you can turn to a consultancy business even though most advertising companies can generally provide you with all the information that you need.

Rules for Your Advertising Campaign

When embarking on your own advertisement campaign you will reap more positive results if you keep your campaign simple. This is because the more time goes by the busier our society is becoming. The 'busy' factor calls upon your skill to make people aware of your products or services requiring the shortest attention of potential prospects as possible.

Here the use of slogans, short messages that yet speak volumes of words will not only ensure that people have the time to read it but it will also turn your message or slogan in to a catchy one.

An important aspect of advertising that can make or break your marketing campaign is that the advertisement tools that you use to represent your business have to genuinely reflect what you have to offer. If in your ads your promise something that creates doubts in your target audience, they will destruct your business and your ad campaign will turn out to be nothing but a waste of time and money. This is because if you fail to create the sense of trust in your target audience, it will not make your products or services desirable enough to query about it let alone invest in your business. The same principle of a trustworthy marketing campaign applies to online marketing and this includes creating a trustworthy image of your business website. Again, creating the impression that people can trust your business will determine the difference between whether people will go for your products and service and whether they will let the information that you have to offer pass by. The ranking of your website therefore becomes as important as the design and content of your website itself.

Moreover, if your ads promise something and you fail to deliver it, it will make people talk about your business in a bad light and you want to avoid this at all costs, especially since word of mouth is a powerful marketing tool that spreads the message around faster than most other means of advertisement. Said in a better way one disappointed person will negatively affect your credibility tenfold. Therefore, when embarking on your ad campaign your focus should be centered on obtaining positive testimonials which can only be achieved through keeping your clients' happy.

Next, you will need to tackle the budgeting issue. While you can have financial freedom your business can also have a limited budget to invest in advertisement, if not a very limited one. So, your budget will determine your ability to try out different advertisement tools. You will need to be very creative, especially if your budget is quite restrictive. Thus, a simple customer feedback from available at your place of business can help you assess what the most effective ad tools of your business could be.

You also should avoid wasting your ad money by targeting people who do not fall within the category of your target market. What is the point in targeting an old generation of females if you are selling teenagers' clothes? Therefore, it is important and vital to your business to aim at the target market sector as you have originally identified in your marketing plan. If you have identified more than one market sector a rule of thumb for an efficient marketing campaign is to tackle a market sector on its own and then move on to the next.

Making people aware of your business is not enough. You need them to actually visit your business premises, your website or to contact you directly for more information. This implies that you will need to create a sense of curiosity or desire in your target market to query more about your products and obtain more information than the advert itself could have provided. If you do this successfully your sales are bound to increase.

Memory boosters

Once you launch an ad campaign, you cannot stop at that. You need to be committed to ensure constant time to time reminders to your target market. Sequential mailing and other forms of communication therefore become crucial to the success of your marketing plan. Whatever way you choose to boost your potential customers' memory, it is suggested that you accompany this communication with promotional products. These free gifts will get your target audience more likely to read what you have to say since promotional products apart from being a momentum ad in themselves, they will make your communication with your prospects more interesting than them simply receiving a flyer or a letter without a gift.

Your follow up should however involve more than **ONE** consequential communication with your clients. In fact your communication should be part of a step-by-step marketing plan. Your step-by-step communication sequence should more or less take the following form:

- ✓ Introductory communication
- ✓ First time buyers communication- special offers
- ✓ State of the fact or market news communication
- ✓ Festivities communication
- ✓ Current customer's communication (and a big YES. Do never forget your existent customers).

Whatever form your communication takes be it through direct mail, emails, phone calls, promotional stands, flyers or by simply sending a text message for example, you need to ensure to make each stage of this part of the marketing campaign more personal.

Remember that you can maximize the effect of your marketing campaign by adding promotional products to every step of your follow up communication plan of action.

About Different Ad tools

Making the most of your post

While mail is a traditional concept over twenty five billion is estimated to be spent on mail every year. This is evidence in itself that direct mail is a top ad tool that you need to take into consideration if you want your business marketing plan to succeed.

Why is mail so successful? Its main reasons for being a successful marketing tool are that you as the investor have complete control over it. This element of control includes how much you want to spend and on who you want to spend it. It also provides you with the opportunity to follow up your direct mailing technique responses as you can monitor who of the targeted people that received your mail actually became part of your clients' database and who of those contacted did not respond.

Do not make the mistake to send direct mail to anyone with an address. Instead choose to invest your money well and stick to your target market as established in your marketing plan. People who cannot be interested in your product or services and therefore people that fall out of your target market will simply throw away your mail and even if they make use of your promotional products they will not generate any sales for you as they are simply not interested in what you have to offer. Basically, you can invest your limited budget in a good way only by targeting your market sector.

Extend your Marketing Campaign

When undertaking a marketing campaign you will need to learn how to make the most of your budget. Joining forces with others that provide a product or service that goes hand in hand with your own business is one such way of extending your marketing campaign while at the same time not burning your budget.

Let us say that you run a digital cameras and other electronics shop. How many times do customers come in and ask for a service that you perhaps cannot provide? Take intensive camera repair or videography services for example. What do you usually do? Do you simply inform your customers that you do not provide these services nor do you refer them to someone else that in your professional opinion can also provide your customers with a good service? If you do not have the information of other people who provide the services or products that your business has to offer, run a light search and contact the service providers or product suppliers. Ask them to join forces in a marketing plan that can help out all the participants including your business.

When joining forces with other people who add to your current business you can reach an agreement for referrals whereby you will send traffic in their direction and your marketing partners will return the favor by sending you their own customers. Additionally, you can discuss a plan of action which will benefit and give a push to your marketing campaign. You will therefore share the expenses of this marketing campaign together by listing down all the names of your marketing partners including yours.

Promotional products play an important role even when partnering with others for your marketing campaign. Let's say you partner with a professional camera repairs business. You can use promotional products interchangeably. This means that the professional camera repairs partner will provide his clients with a promotional product representing your business and which you yourself have provided. You can offer a 25% discount on photo development packages with each camera service or an album among many other options. Your marketing partner can in return offer camera lens cleaning products, memory cards or camera packaging that is specifically designed to protect the camera from getting damaged while moving it from one place to another. The more creative you can get when coming up with promotional products in your marketing and partnering campaign the more successful it will. The bottom line however is that these promotional products have to be useful and inter-linked to each others' business so that your prospects will find your products or services desirable.

You can partner with as many other businesses as you want. The successful step in this type of market partnering is that your partners run a business that compliment your own so that your potential customers can see that they are getting both value as well as quality by using all the businesses involved.

Making use of e-mail marketing is another way of extending your marketing campaign regardless of what kind of business you operate in and despite the fact that your business is a small one. In fact, e-mail marketing has in recent years become one of the main advertisement tools for businesses of any kind. The idea behind e-mail marketing is to make more people visit your online website apart from making your target market aware of your business and offers. This traffic is usually directed to your website by including the link of your website in the e-mail you are marketing your business with. The more people click on your website address, the further up the internet search engines ranking your website will go. Additionally, you will also get more people to see what your business has to offer be it both products or services which will ultimately lead to more sales, especially if the visitors you attract form part of your target market audience.

While it is true that in order to send large amounts of e-mails during your marketing campaign, you will need both time and human resources to do it, unlike other marketing tools e-mail marketing perhaps is the cheapest, most effective, focused and fastest ad tool that your

business will ever use. Moreover, even if you happen to be a person who is not so friendly towards the internet you will soon discover that there are many e-mail marketing software programs that can be easily applied to your marketing campaign without requiring all that knowledge about computers. You will for example find readymade templates, follow up software products that also help you divide the people on your list as well as assist you in coming up with a strategic plan of action for this part of your marketing campaign.

Your human resources expense will be lowered however if you already have an electronic client database ready as then it will simply involve a question of bulk copy and paste jobs. Just like an introductory letter or a follow up offer letter that you can send by mail, in e-mail marketing you can come up with a number of standard '*e-letters*' and forward it to all of those who are listed on your clients' database. This is of course cheaper than traditional mail because you save up on paper, printing, envelopes and overall postage. E-mail marketing is also faster because while mail in the post can take a few days, an e-mail is delivered to your clients within seconds.

Another advantage of e-mail marketing when compared to other ad tools is that the internet is a way that enables your business to communicate with its clients and with other potential customers whose information you have gathered so that you can keep them posted with information about your business. How often have you heard clients or potential prospects exclaim something on the line that they will get back to you about a business offer and yet even though they were genuinely interested they never found the time to actually do so? Well, e-mail marketing is the solution to this gap between the promise made to you by potential clients and your expectation that they actually follow your business offer up. In fact, after formulated standard e-marketing letters you should always add the link to your website around twice or three times at different paragraphs. This is because while reading your customers or prospects may be tempted to click on the website and eventually visit it. Even if they do not purchase anything they would have helped you make your website more visible to others when running an online search. To promote both your website and your offer you should include phrases like '*click here*' or '*visit us at www. (Website address).com*' to benefit from this offer.

Because you cannot send promotional products through a wire transfer some people look at internet marketing as limited in scope because it fails to create the desire in the target audience to open your e-mail. However, in reality this is an advantage as the promise of a promotional product can help you increase your database list by asking your website visitors to fill in certain contact information in order for them to receive the free promotional product. However, since e-mail marketing is not a face to face interaction and it also is not a package that can be touched when received through the post, you need to find a way to attract your potential readers to open the email. Consequently, the subject line of your email has to be at the centre of your attention and you must be both creative and clever in formulating the subject of your

email. The subject you choose will determine whether your e-mail will be opened or marked as trash.

Experts in the field have come up with many clever ideas to generate the curiosity of the e-mail receiver to open it. Some of these tips would include a subject description such as “get a free gift when...” or ‘benefit now from a chance to win a ...’ without explaining anything at all about the gift in the subject line. Then repeat the line and complete the description in the e-mail itself. There are various clever ways to create a desire in your e-mail recipients. This will of course depend on the extent you are willing to go in your marketing promotion. Receiving a free gift (which is usually a promotional product) can be the result of simply signing up thereby providing you with more information about the consumer market out there. The free promotional product can also be provided when purchasing something from you of a certain brand or when spending a certain amount. On the other hand a *possibility to win* is not binding on you to provide a certain number of promotional gifts but it will reap certain benefits for you. One thing has been proven over and over again: The idea that your target market will receive something for *free* will generate more traffic and interest in what you have to say. Bottom line you should always consider using promotional products to maximize the response of the public to your marketing campaign.

Your website is also another online tool that you can use to promote your products and services. The first thing that you must cater for after your website content and design have been finalized is again joining forces with other people by backlinking your website to their website. This means that while browsing through their website people might be directed to your website because you have taken the time to organize these links. What does this mean for you? Apart from more exposure and besides increasing the possibility of generating more sales and interest in your products and services, the larger the number of people that visit your website, the better your website ranking will be when online users run a search on search engines. Imagine yourself browsing on the internet for let’s say butter. Once, the search engine has finished searching it will give you a list of possible vendors of butter. This list is usually organized on order of priority. This order is determined on the amount of traffic your website receives. Of course, you are more likely to benefit if your website is among the first few website on the front page of any given search engine. This is because given the busy life people lead, it is most likely that people will opt to purchase products or browse those businesses on the front page. What this means for you is that you are likely to generate more sales if your website ranks among the list on the first page of the search engine. Therefore, backlinking your business to the chamber of commerce, to the local governmental website that is related to your business such as for example the grants section and the consumer services, would be a good way to increase the traffic to your website.

Another top benefit of having a website is that it will bring your way customers that you have not met. If you are restricted to a particular area of town for example which you can easily promote your products or services to face to face, a website can reach people on the other side of town and more. In fact, there are millions of people that make use the internet as their primary source of information. To be brief and sum it all up, the internet is the most sought after source of information now-a-days and if you want your marketing campaign to reach its full potential you should make the most of this information tool. If your marketing strategy does not incorporate this very important marketing tool you will be missing out on a lot of clients.

As will be explained further on in this book, whatever step you take when using a marketing tool has to be accompanied by a marketing strategy which is ultimately dependent on what you want to achieve when undertaking a particular marketing approach. This is usually referred to as tangible objectives and should be included in your marketing plan. Of course, you will start to learn more about your market and how your business operates in this specific market as you start implementing your marketing plan. You need not be concerned if you find yourself changing your marketing strategy as you go along. However, these changes should always be advantageous to you and your business in that they help bring you closer to the objectives you laid down when you first formulated your marketing plan.

Chapter 7: The raison d'être behind promotion

Leaving an impact on the mind of people is the primary role of running an advertising campaign (Walter Dill Scott). Scott was also of the opinion that no human being is immune to the power of suggestion. He reasoned that rather than thought people acted on basis of suggestions and this is why ingenuity, repetition; association value and intensity are important concepts to apply in any promotion.

Because promotional products fulfill these four elements and are also suggestive, consumers are more likely to visit your business more often and earlier than when they do not receive promotional products.⁵ This positive aspect of promotional products is further backed up by the fact that people now-a-days live a very hectic life and they don't have the time to stop and read adverts most of the time but when you think about it promotional products are there to remind them of your business all the time. Therefore because of the busy lives, it is most likely that when the need of a product or service arises people will act on instinct. Consequently, they are more likely to give a few minutes to your sales letter and throw it away in the bin; but something is sure that they will keep the calendar, mug, keychain or whatever other promotional product you have provided them with together with your promotional sales letter. Bottom line is the fact that once potential customers as well as current customers keep the promotional items they are also keeping at hand the contact information about your business. As we have seen the statistics of people who keep promotional products for over a year is quite good and these promotional items holders have a higher probability of actually turning to your business, especially if in your sales letter you have offered something that is interesting to them.

However, because at the end of the day a business is about figures, you cannot take for granted the percentage of people (around 45%) who either does not get to read your contact information or does not like to keep promotional items. So what do you do in order to make the most of your marketing campaign? You keep reminding them and sequential mailing since as it will be explained this will play a very important role to make up for this loophole in your marketing campaign.

As will be discussed, there are many more marketing fillers that you can recur to in order to ensure that your campaign is an all encompassing one that does not leave any page unturned.

⁵ Discovered through a PPAI study

Chapter 8: How to Promote Sales

You will need to attract new clients to your business and keep your existent database customers happy if you want to increase your sales. Sales are increased by either bringing new people to your business or by ensuring that the amount paid for each transaction increases. This can pose to you quite a challenge especially since you constantly have to try to keep existent customers coming to your business and not replacing you for the products or services of your competitors. However, keeping your current customers is much cheaper than attracting new ones. A way to ensure the increase of your sales is by making the most of what people in the business refer to as sales promotion.

So what exactly is a sales promotion? It is that part of your business plan whose main aim is to generate a desire in people to purchase your good or hire your services, thereby improving the incoming flow of sales for your business. Interestingly, a sales promotion allows you through different offers or incentives to continue to communicate with your existent clients who will most likely be motivated to purchase more than they normally do either by returning more frequently or by . These rewards or incentives will also attract along new clients. Sales promotions make your relationship with your clients lasts longer in terms of repeat sales; and this is beneficial to your business whether you are selling products or are offering particular services.

How to go about a sales promotion?

The first step that you have to take is to determine what it is exactly that you want to achieve. In order to take action that will reap the desired results you need to write down your objectives. The main question that you need to answer at this stage is the reasons why you want to take up a sales promotion campaign. Do you for example want to get rid of old stock or promote a new product or service? Do you want to attract new clients or do you want to motivate your current customers to come back more often in order to increase your sales? Determining the scope of undertaking a sales promotion is a crucial step that you do not want to miss.

Next you need to establish the period of the year you want to launch your sales promotion for. Determining the duration of your promotion will:

- Create a sense of limited availability (hence the need to lay their hands on the product now⁶);
- Avoid it from getting boring and ineffective.

⁶ Again we see the psychology behind human behavior to purchase soemthing on impulse especially if it is a limited offer.

Imagine giving a mug for the purchase of five cans of tomato pulp of a particular brand. While the offer will intrigue people to purchase the product, they will get bored and won't be motivated to purchase it time and time again, especially if they have a collection of 6 mugs. You wouldn't want your promotional items to start being considered as trash. This is the underlying reason why establishing a starting date and end date for your sales promotion is vital if you want it to be successful. If you wish to keep promoting your tomato pulp brand you can start a new promotion by for example offering your customers new gifts and offers. Keep changing your promotional offers at time intervals will ensure that your customers won't get bored of the product but they will rather look forward to see what free object they can get with their purchase.

The third step is to choose a strategy. A sales promotion strategy involves deciding how you will inform people about your promotion. This will call upon your imagination and some initial brain storming on what could really work to reach your objective as opposed to something that can turn out to be a useless investment. Although quite demanding on your mind, this step is an issue of trial and error. The important thing to do is trying the ideas that you think will work out. If your selected strategy does not work, move to the next one and the next until you find something that works out for your business and target market. This brainstorming exercise will only add to your marketing business experience. Should you wish to get your investment in promotional product as close to the right choice the very first time, the use of surveys to get an idea of what your customers need, wish or would like to have could make all the difference to your sales promotion campaign.

If you want to ensure that your sales promotion is a success you will first need to start why communicating your incentives to the people who often come in touch with your business such as your family, partners, your employees and management. Ensure to send the message across that these people promote your offer daily for a limited period. Word of mouth is usually the best way to promote anything. You could therefore speak to your customers, to your suppliers, promote it at business meetings and in turn these people might also pass on the message to their families, friends and others during other activities or mundane conversations. Take advantage of each encounter with people even if this is not at the place of your business. So speak about it to your financial staff, to your butcher, to your bank, to the mothers of your children's friends, to their teachers and any other situation that involves contact with people. Again these people will most likely promote your incentive by word of mouth. You should also have an ace up your sleeve and have a plan set up to reward the people who are promoting your business, a term which in the field of marketing we refer to as promoters. Promoters could be the people working for you, your customers, different entities, your friends and relatives. There are many ways how you can reward your promoters. Rewarding them is necessary as at the back of their mind they do think of the benefits, if any at all, will they get by assisting you in

your promotion. Although paying promoters a commission is a helpful way to initiate your promotion, you can boost its effects by creating another parallel sales promotion for your staff. New customers approached by the people who promoted your business could for example be provided with a promoters' identification code and you can note down the sales, the number of new people or the increase in sales different promoters have helped contribute to your business. Make it a point to inform them that performance will be rewarded and do reward the promoter who best pushed your sales promotion on the fast track. Again, the reward will be a promotional product. You will need to invest a bit extra here and make the promotional product look like a desirable price, after all it is a competition of which promoter makes your marketing campaign work best for you.

Besides word of mouth, you will then proceed to publicize your sales promotion and this of course would depend on the budget that you have at your disposition. Ways to publicize your sales promotion would include mail, posters, flyers, the internet, on social networks, catalogues, information on invoices, newspaper, adverts inside your store on your walls, colorful signs hanging from your store or office's ceiling and public radio among others.

One important thing to remember as you go along is the reason why you wanted to initiate a sales promotion. Any thing you do should be focused on reaching that objective. Thus, if for instance your main objective was to promote a new product, you can make it look more attractive by adding offers to that product. Of course, if your offer caters for all your products it does not necessarily mean that people will buy your new product although it could increase your sales. So you have to be sure that you place all your focus on your objectives.

As you delve further into your sales promotion you will start picking up tactics like these. If you want to increase the amount of sales per month or attract new clients offering a promotional product with a certain amount spent or uses a referral reward program. If the need of your business is to get rid of old or unpopular products you can donate a free promotional product each time it is purchased. If you want your customers to come again, you could give them an offer that they can use on their next purchase.

After you have established your objectives, the strategies and tactics you want to employ such as the type of promotional products you will use and the duration of your sales promotion, it is time that you put all your plans into action.

Chapter 9: Your relationship with your team and the general public

The salient ingredient in this relationship is how well you manage to motivate the people around you whether they are part of your team or even if they are listed as your targets on your marketing plan as well if the people or organizations have nothing to do with your business.

You will know if your team is one that is working to meet your target objectives when they work along with you as a team. When it comes to building a good relationship with your team you will both feel and see it usually through how well they communicate with each other and with you as well as with your customers. Your team's approach to your business therefore assumes particular significance. Still you will need to motivate your team and you can often successfully do this by rewarding them.

However, you also need to have a good relationship with the public. The positive combination of this hierarchical interaction is also referred to as *public relations*. The most popular definition of public relations is that given by the Public Relations Society of America (2003) which holds that "*public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other*". Basically, by using public relations you try to get the acceptance of the society you living by adjusting certain aspects of your organization, thereby creating a peaceful co-existence whereby a relationship is developed that caters for mutual advantages to both your business as well as to the public at large.

But how can you muster public relations and what can you do to make the most of it? The first barrier that you will have to break is to understand the social behavior and what your society holds valuable, and this should begin with understanding the internal working of your community. You will need to reach out to the people around you whether they are somehow involved in your organization or not. A way to reach out is to come up with policies and practices that are built on the values of your community in order to ensure that the general public views your business in a good light. This would include your employees, managers, customers, non-customers and other activities or events that help others including your business providing support to other organizations such as NGOs and charity institutions even if this has no direct connection to your business. However simple this may sound you will need to learn to come up with types of measures that support the opinion of the public and this will require an in-depth analysis of your social surroundings including the public's concerns and behavior. The most effective way of developing a positive relationship with the public is to face and take on your social responsibilities first; and just because you need to somehow make the public see that you share their same ideas and concerns you will have to find a way to

communicate your position to them whether you are dealing with environmental, charity, employment, governmental, historical preservation, the establishment of a recreational complex or family issues among several others. By adopting this approach you will slowly start to build a good relationship because the public will perceive your business as one that cares in the same way as the public does.

When you begin to see the positive results that emerge out of building good public relations you will start to see a pattern emerging and this pattern links your business to the support of others in the community even if they were not the reason your business was set up for. So whether you provide political support, an open door policy, commissions, monthly awards or free child care to your employees, fund the restructuring of the local school library, provide stationary, banners, food stands, balloons or any other item that helps these activities or events to be organized, it is having this positive relationship with others around you that will help boast your sales and which will provide your business with a public element. After all, public relations are about give and take and if you invest in the public, the public is most likely to re-invest in your business venture. Public relations will additionally re-enforce the concept of team spirit in your internal organization because your internal staff will also start to feel positive to be part of your team as opposed to feeling emarginated by feeling that your business is just one large economic structure.

Remember the more people know about you the higher the chance of them making use of your business. The principle to remember, especially in public relations, is to invest where there is a need of a solution to specific problems in society, even if this issue is on a global level or if it has nothing to do with you as this can only work in your favor rather than against it. Providing these organizations with your products or services to assist them in obtaining a solution is a great idea especially if what you have to offer is a much needed input by the organization you are helping.

Where to start in public relations?

Just like in any other step of your marketing campaign you will need to lay down objectives which involve mainly knowing what you want to achieve by undertaking this road. In considering what you want to obtain and also in examining how you are going to reach these objectives you will need to take in to account the following key elements:

- Your stuff (whether past, present or future);
- Your market environment;
- Society;

- Concerns: issues and problems that could need an extra hand such as depletion of natural resources, people in need of financial assistance, the vulnerable sector of society, sick people, medical research , political and public offences issues.
- Do you want to involve professional consultants to help you establish your public relations and making your good efforts known?
- Take a look at your local surroundings to determine where you can play an important role. Search for nonprofit organizations and fund raising events that are important to the people in your community and select what you would like to participate in. Needless to say this choice will be dependent on the balance between your budget as well as benefits that you want to reap out of this venture.

These are some of the fundamental aspects to consider right from the start although you may wish to include others.

Organizations worth looking at

The more people follow, support or belong to an organization, the greater importance they will assume for your public relations program.

National Centre for Charitable Statistics, Charity of America and the American Institute of Philanthropy among other entities as these will provide you with a starting point for your public relations. What these entities do is to provide you with lists and additional information of organizations that require your assistance and them also lay down what kind of help these organizations require.

Some other events and organizations that you should take into consideration would include:

- Heart power;
- AIDS Research Alliance of America;
- Making Strides Against Breast Cancer;
- The American Red Cross;
- Character Counts;
- Your local boy or girls scouts;
- Local educational and medical institutions;
- Children's homes;
- Animal shelters;
- Health and safety at the place of work or at school;
- Local school incentives;
- Hoops for Heart;
- The American Heart Walk;

- The American Heart Association;
- Habitat for Humanity International;
- D.A.R.E.;
- Crime or substance abuse prevention programs;
- The American Cancer Society Relay for Life;
- Local athletic groups;
- Jump Rope for Heart ;
- Local search and rescue groups;
- National public feast days linked to a cause such as Red Ribbon week and African American History month;
- Educational and vocational programs.

The above are just examples of causes and organizations that you can help and there are many other options that you can explore. You can always build your own personal list as you go along. Special attention should also be placed on the United Way, an organization that brings together people from all walks of life and is the lead in America's social problem solving. Like other organizations United Way has a huge incentive to generate funds. Volunteer organizations belonging to different local communities add up to an average of one thousand four hundred. Bringing these organizations together is the main scope of United Way and is the way it helps assists with the needs of different communities.

The large statistics of people and organization involved in addressing community issues are the very reason why your business will hugely benefit by participating in their activities through promotional products. So you should always take a look at the statistics of these organizations as well as to the percentage of the American population these organizations target. For example, there are an estimated forty million HIV sufferers in America. Now that is a big number and can significantly aid your public relations while at the same time you are helping their cause.

Making your public relations public

Despite all the good feelings that can come to you and your employees from helping others and even if you can do this without a catch at the end of the line, this book aims to help you make your business more profitable. Therefore, once you have decided to take the road of public relations it is not enough that you do these good deeds and leave it at that no matter how personally satisfying it is to you. You will therefore need to make the public know about your role in these social events and your support in helping to solve public issues.

Again promotional products assume a highlight position here and you will need to make the most of them in order to make the public know that you too are behind the step forward that

society has taken. Why do you need to let people know the important role that you have played? Simple, because it gets people to know about your business, it creates in them a positive connotation to your products or services and consequently it creates in them a desire to want to support your venture in return for all the good that you have provided your community with. All this will in return make your business reach *if not* increase its sales' target.

So if you feel comfortable enough to come up with your own ideas without the need to recur to professional consultancy companies, your one way ticket to publicizing your positive input is through the use of promotional products. You do not need to have a live interview on your local station to achieve this public element.

Selecting the event or organization that you are willing to support and then choosing promotional products that are best suited for these events is a good public relations tactic.

Some Ideas for Public Relations

Taking into consideration what we have already discussed in this chapter, you will need to come up with a step by step plan of action that reflects your own business objectives. You will need to use all the imagination at your disposition and most importantly of all is the need that you go for something that is dear to your community. Remember the more popular an organization is usually an indication of the most treasured values of the citizens of your area. What does this mean for you? It basically means that choosing the most important organization or the event that has the most highlights in the media will get more exposure for your business as opposed to an event or an organization that is not so popular. Although every little bit of exposure helps, you have to remember that you are doing this to increase your sales or attract new clients and above all you will be making an investment in promotional products. For this reason you will need to ensure that whatever organization or event you will support, it has to make it worth your while. Hence, the need arises for you to opt to support the most valuable entities or activities in the eye of the public.

Let's say that after due consideration of your local market, statistics have led you to believe that health, fitness and fighting obesity is the highest concern in the eyes of the public for whatever reason. Start by browsing through organizations and events that represent these concerns. What type of promotional products do you think they will need to run a successful event or to function in the long-run? Being a health inspired topic there are a lot of items that you can use as your promotional products. Glasses, mugs, athletic wrist or knee bands, caps, bottles, sportswear, calorie counting diaries, stands, electronic gadgets such as pedometers and many other items. Look for anything that you can imprint your business information on.

If you are unsure about upcoming events or what these organizations could really make use of, why not contact them and take action on their feedback? After all, even the people who ran

these organizations will appreciate your support and might eventually find using your products or services desirable.

At the same time that you are running this in-depth plan of action you will need to involve as many people at your end as possible. This would include making your employees, employees' relatives, family and friends participate. If you think about it your business will benefit highly from the volunteering of these people to assist you in a good cause. But your employees do not have to be physically present at the event. You can provide them with reasonable options that allow them to contribute to this event by either spending time by helping out at your stand and passing on promotional products, by passing on your connection to this event to your clientele and other people they come across with either through flyers, word of mouth or the internet or by contributing a small percentage of their wage to the event among many other options to motivate your staff to participate.

Of course as discussed previously in the sales promotion chapter, motivation and participation are increased when there is a reward at stake. Thus, even during your public relations you need to reward your promoters. You can also turn their participation in the event into a competition where the best individual or team of individuals reach a certain target or comes closest to it and reward them by giving them a prize such as cinema, theatre or sport events tickets. You can use the same approach to attract the interest of the general public in the event. In fact, rather than obtaining blood donations from free willed individuals, the American Red Cross gets a higher response through sponsored events where donors also stand to win a prize.

Alternatively, support a good cause by donating a promotional product like the ones mentioned in the rest of this book to increase public participation which is a healthy and rewarding way both for you and for the community at large to interact together.

In these events it is also important that apart from imprinting your contact information on your promotional products, you should also find a way of linking your promotional product by adding a message on it. In the case of an event related to health and fitness you could for example add the words "I am fit and fine" or "We are all for health". This ensures that you are not only helping a good cause but you are also getting your name out there.

Be your own Community's motivator

Let's say that you read in the Sunday newspaper that a home for children is about to close down due to lack of funds. Reading this might have made you uneasy and one cannot help but wonder how upset the rest of your community feels. What can you do to help the children's home? You can organize an event or a sequence of events to sponsor this home either through direct financing, donations of food, clothes or a call out for human resources such as volunteers, after school teachers, cleaners, drivers, maintenance services and gardeners. Why

not ask your staff to participate and be the first to help out for this good cause? To strengthen the team spirit provides your employees, family and friends with accessories showing the name of the event or cause as well as your business information.

You can make use of different promotional products at different stages of the event. Reward the highest financial donor with a good prize, reward participants with promotional products with each donation, supply quilts with your name on it and a tag line to support the event. Use containers with your imprinted information on it as the volunteers of the event go door to door collecting donations. Place your information on cash donations jars, on the stands used as the meeting point for the event, on the flyers use for promoting the event and on the t-shirts or hats you give volunteers. Add a coupon or a discount to your flyers, car or baby bags.

The idea of saving other individuals, especially neglected or orphaned children is something that widely appeals to the general public. What more could be a better way to build team and community spirit while at the same time exposing your business than joining forces together to support such a good and much needed cause?

So the main driving factor behind setting off your public relations is to be kept informed of the needs of society. You can take a look at shelters, pressing environmental problems and research funding for example. You then need to figure out a way to act on these needs and the best way to do this is to show that you care by providing the organizations with items and incentives that will assist them in their cause.

Chapter 10: Human resources

They say that a happy employee is a productive employee and that a happy customer is a returning customer. Bottom line, these sayings hold a fundamental truth in them that every business should keep in mind at every stage of its business activity. Human resources, therefore, assumes a study or an understanding of the human mind and behavior. What can you do to make your customers and employees feel better and how can you do it?

Alternatively, what is that would motivate your staff and make them feel satisfied to work for your business? The same question can be posed towards customers: What will make your customer return time and time again? The starting point is usually that of looking at how your organization behaves towards both categories of people. How are you motivating them and equally how are you discouraging them?

A promotional campaign is again one of the ways that you can keep both your employees and customers satisfied to be dealing not only with you but with your business. A promotional campaign helps increase the drive and motivation of your employees the same way it will ensure that your customers are satisfied. After a while of using your promotional campaign you will notice that the possibilities and benefits that you will receive in return are priceless. Additionally, making use of these products will act as a safety net to ensure the success of your campaign, will encourage team spirit, improve the rate of your sales, give your training programs a value and will increase participation and commitment, make your employees more aware of your business activities and of the fact that you will reward outstanding performance and effort on their part thereby building their morale allowing you to reach your business targets in the long run. Overall, promotional products create a positive feeling, reap higher financial rewards and ensure good workmanship on the part of your employees at the place of work of your organization. Promotional strategies will ensure that your workforce goes beyond the typical de-motivated working sector of society.

Just like the benefits of using promotional products are outstanding, there is no limit to what promotional products you should use. Let's say you provide your employees with rewards such as imprinted badges to show a certain achievement. They will surely appreciate you taking the time to notice their effort and commitment.

All about Motivation

The starting point is that to understand and accept that very human being is able to do something about their situation because they have their own objectives, capabilities and talents.

Now, it is time to take a look at your employees. Where does each individual employee stand? Which level has he achieved? Who are the introverts and do you have any extroverts? Your task

is to help each type of employee to reach the next level and to make them feel self-confident or showing them that they have the right skills or abilities they did not know they possessed or that although they knew they possess the ability to do a certain task or fulfill a certain role. You can do this by acknowledging their talents, efforts, abilities and performance. You can acknowledge all this through rewards.

Basically, you will be providing motivation from the outside which is known as extrinsic motivation which in simple words means kicking to life what your employees have hidden inside. If you regularly provide monthly rewards in the form of cash for the best performing employees of the month you will surely encourage most of your employees to give their best performance or to up the game. If an employee has certain basic needs that need to be met such as paying outstanding debts, some extra cash into their pockets will certainly provide them with the much needed motivation to carry the task asked of them in a better way than they do. Regardless of the needs of your employees, you can successfully motivate them by means of well planned recognition schemes. At the end of the day both you and your employees both stand to win.

Your employees need to be appreciated

When running a business and while investing in your human resources department you have to provide constant fuel to the psychological aspect of your workforce. As human beings your employees need to feel understood, appreciated and validated.

By now you should have taken a look at the status and performance of your workforce. If you have noticed your employees taking chronically sick leaves or reporting to work past the starting hour of their shift or even if you have repeatedly heard them provide negative feedback in relationship to any work related aspect it is time to take some real positive action. This is especially true as the existent negative approach to work can rub off on to other work employees. In addition, exemplary employees may start to feel that there is no point in keeping the good track record and their positive aspects up because other non-exemplary employees are getting away with it and they are not getting any recognition for their good effort anyway. The bottom line is that you want to improve slacking behavior and turn it to a positive input but you also want to avoid employees who have demonstrated good behavior from becoming discouraged or de-motivated. Imagine yourself in the same situation. How would you feel if you performed well on a daily basis and yet you are treated the same way as other employees who basically run their own schedule rather than that of the business they work for? Even the idea of regularly putting up with people who have no ambition could make exemplary workers ask themselves why they have to endure it. The lack of recognition of good employees will not only frustrate them but it could also be the reason why your employees' turnover is so high.

Therefore, if you want your workforce to fully participate at the place of work and if you want to create a positive atmosphere it becomes important that you make them feel understood, appreciated and validated. But how can you do this? First of all calling a meeting and showing your true feelings about the low moral atmosphere your workers have demonstrated in their recent work history should not be an option. You will certainly need to acknowledge what they have achieved, them taking the extra mile, them setting an exemplary employee behavior to others employed in the same business, their leadership skills and the input of new ideas to the betterment of your business. Thus it is more appropriate to learn to replace your anger agenda with a good deed that will enhance the atmosphere at the workplace. Why not reward the best employee or employees out of the blue with a surprise reward or gift. Make sure that this recognition of achievement reward takes place in front of as many other employees as possible such as your regular training sessions, monthly staff meeting or activity. Plan in advance how you are going to present the award and what you are going to say to show your appreciation towards the exemplary employee's efforts.

In the long run and a safe way to constantly show your appreciation is to make the best out of occasions and events that are important to your employees. Do provide them with a gift or reward on their graduation, them getting a driving license, your employee achieving a certain target, their contract renewal anniversary and any other social occasion that although personal to the employee concerned by awarding them an event token or gift you are showing them that you care and that you appreciate them.

Equip Your Employees

If you want your employees to perform their tasks in a better way, you will need to add on to their skills or develop them. A successful way of doing this is by providing your employees regular training sessions. These training sessions have to be goal oriented. Thus, you will need to see why you want your employees to take a certain course or to undergo a certain training session. How will the educational or vocational training benefit your employees and what do you expect to achieve in return?

So if your goal is to teach your new employees the underlying mechanisms of your business, you will provide the new recruits with an orientation training session. This orientation session should target the sector or station for which the employee will be responsible for. If you want your new trainee manager to be a successful communicator you provide him with training that helps him or her build a better communication skills. Just like with any other step in your marketing design you need firstly to establish objectives and determine what it is exactly that you want to achieve by training your employees.

There are many aspects of your workforce that as a human resources manager you can invest in. These would include courses or programs aimed at developing their skills or help them discover what they are good at; minimize administrative or secretarial mistakes or data inputting errors; to strengthen their idea on the importance of quality assurance and the organization's overall objectives; develop their customer care skills and intuition, to increase attendance at the place of work; increase the sense of working as a team; provide them with knowledge about your products and why they are important; to develop their concentration and commitment as well as to empower your employees with new skills and knowledge among others. Whatever it is that you would like your employees to discover, learn or improve on, if the training provided is effective your employees will be able to relate further to their activities and their role in your organization. Investing in your employees is also a way to decrease the amount of workers that quit the job because you are providing them with self-worth. All the above benefits of training your employees are a sure way to ensure the increase of your rate of sales.

After writing down the objectives that you want to reach with your training program, you can now plan in detail your training session. Start drafting questions to ask your employees during the training session. These questions can also be general self explanatory questions that can further support the topic of the session and they can also be directed at the people who are running the training session for you. In that way with your questions you are ensuring that you make the most out of your training session by bringing out the points, topics and knowledge that are of utmost importance to convey to your employees in order to reach the objectives of your training programs. The importance of these questions cannot be undermined, especially the ones addressed at your employees as this is a simple mechanism through which you can ensure that they are indeed listening and absorbing the information rather than being there just because they were obliged to.

Investing in employee training is vital to your business as it makes all the difference between motivated employees as opposed to having workers that simply log in just for the wage. You will of course need to combine your workforce's training with a promotional product incentive. This is important to you because you will lower the degree of complaints from your employees; an aspect which shows that they are unhappy or not motivated to be working at your business and you want to keep that at a minimum.

Again you will need to ask yourself whether your employees act the way they do because of something related directly to them or because the work environment does not motivate them. Ask yourself how they appeared to you when they got hired. It is quite likely that they were quite looking forward to start working for your business. So what happened along the way to change that? Did they have to face work conflicts, a surplus of work or lack of recognition for

their efforts that made them start to relate to working with your business with a negative outlook? Something must have happened to bring down their morale.

So when you are facing human resources issues such as the ones explained above, your starting point should be to go through how your business operates and specifically how it deals with employees. Are you recognizing their efforts? Do all your employees get treated the same way and is the way you treat them fair? If your answers to these questions are in the positive, then your employees could do with some encouragement and cheering up on your part. If you suspect that the reason why your employees are feeling low is because they are facing too many conflicts at the place of work and somehow they exhibit constantly challenging behavior towards you and towards each other. Another factor that could be leading to these human resources issues is if you have had your hands too full to notice what was going on with your employees. Lack of team spirit is generally one of the main reasons why most workers feel low about their job. There is disagreement between the sharing of shifts and lack of communication between your employees due to fact that they work opposite shift and this renders the hand over quite a cumbersome procedure that can only lead to frustration, especially if you do not have an effective communication policy in place.

Then if there are some human resources problems it is most likely that your employees are more focused on dealing with these issues rather than reaching the targets of your business plan and this includes the increase in sales. You can counteract the human resources problem that you are facing by introducing promotional products incentives to alleviate these issues and put your employees in the right state of mind that will enable them to be more willing to pursue your business objectives and goals. This is after all the type of employee behavior that you need to promote in order to run a successful business as well as to complement your marketing campaign and make the most of it.

So you need to prepare these promotional products before each training session as you need to hand these over during or after the training session. Since these are your employees we are talking about and since you want to increase their motivation, boost their morale and up their performance your gifts should be ones of a higher value than the ones you give out to the general public. Once again, it is not enough for a promotional product to have a higher price tag but as in any other case you need to ensure that these are useful products.

Apart from preparing the content or important point that you want to bring up in a particular training session and on top of organizing promotional products, you will need to come up with ideas for ice breakers activities as well as trust exercises. The use of a ball, straws with their wrapping on and without the wrapping on or even having the straws color coded are good ways to get your employees involved. You can use the ball (ensure it is a soft ball that cannot injure any of your employees) can be used to ask them questions. Do not be the one person who is

always throwing the ball around. Allow your employees to throw it around with each question. This is a sure way to ensure a random element and avoid them from feeling that they are being picked on; rather you are making them feel part of a group. The use of different color coded straws or those which have a wrapping and others that have none could for example be part of your promotional product whereby you reveal to your employees that those who have a straw with a wrapping on have won themselves a free cinema ticket or a promotional product of a higher value than the one that is going to be given to the employees whose straws do not have their wrapping on. Alternatively, you can inform employees that once they answer a question correctly after they have caught the ball they are free to select a gift from your promotional products basket. To add entertainment and make the questions' activity more interesting, you can have wrapped gifts and other that aren't wrapped. Once you inform your employees about the free goodies basket, they will surely eye it to investigate what it is that you are offering in it. The majority will of course have already made up their mind on the gift that they will pick up once they have answered the question right. However, the fact that another colleague can pick it up before them enhances both participation as well as interest in your training session.

Remember that not all employees have the same ambitions. While to some of them your initiative might seem exciting and makes your business look more professional in their eyes, others may find this boring, inconveniently challenging and an outright waste of time. Therefore, generating this interest in your training sessions is fundamental if you want to reach the objectives for which you have scheduled this session in the first place and this can be achieved through the use of promotional products that are well presented and taking the form of a fun activity.

Holding sessions that are both motivational as well as entertaining will reap the following benefits:

- Your employees will pay attention to the information and knowledge provided in your training session;
- Your objectives will be easier to reach once you have your employees cooperation;
- The participating employees are most likely to spread the word to other non-present employees whether their absence is due to personal reasons or because they were on shift on the date set out for the training session. Promotional gifts and positive feedback from other employees will increase your workforce participation next time round you hold a training session. It will also instill in all your employees a sense of motivation as surely an employer who not only invests in their training but who also provides good quality rewards for participation is an employer that is highly motivated and is most likely to recognize their efforts at some point in time. Once again, word of mouth has

brought to your business a positive domino effect making your employees talk about your latest training and the free gifts they received in return.

If like most other workplaces lack of team spirit is the main problem your employees face on a daily basis, make sure to put the employees in conflict on the same team as this helps them to work together to achieve a common goal which is mainly to win the challenge that you have set up for them. Of course the motivation is the promotional gift that you have prepared for the winner.

A simple step that might make all the difference at the workplace is that you reward every participant something, even if it does not bear the same value as the main prize.

Your Post Training program approach

Now that you have implemented your training program through regular sessions to meet your business objectives you should have noticed that the atmosphere at the workplace has started to shift, especially through the brilliant invention of promotional products or gifts.

A mistake some businesses do is to see the training sessions through and they just stop at that. But this is not a wise approach to take especially when you have invested so much in your training program. Moreover, you need to keep your employees motivated and a way to do this is to remind them of what they have learnt so that it is not forgotten with the passage of time.

The right approach to make the most of your training program is to get your workers to use it as soon as the session is terminated. For example, let's say that yesterday you held a training session that dealt with customer care and customer satisfaction services. Your employees have learnt that listening, looking smart, using the right body language and smiling will actually earn them more tips. How would you put this into practice? Will you rely solely on the hope that your employees make an effort to put into practice what they have learnt? Unfortunately, this is not enough. Again motivation plays a very important role in the successful implementation of training programs. In order to achieve this you have to think again in terms of *recognition, acknowledgment and rewards*. Consequently, after the training of your employees on customer care services is seen through, go ahead and launch a reward scheme or better yet a competition for excellent customer care service or for going the extra mile for customer care services. Your staff will be motivated and your customers will be satisfied through this positive experience and will either increase your sales, make them into returning customers or speak well of your business. It is a win win situation.

Now take the name or topic of the training session away and replace it with another one that represents yet another objective that you want to achieve. Follow the same reward recognition

scheme principles explained above to keep on motivating your employees as well as reaching your business.

Chapter 11: Take your Business to a Trade Fair

A better way to explain the concept of trade show marketing is by referring to it as a low budget, time-efficient business tool that leads to first hand exposure with many new people. Participating in a trade show will add on to your clients' database, inspire you to try out new ideas and bring a traffic of customers at your business' doorstep. Trade fairs are perceived by business experts to make all the difference to a business that is struggling or to small businesses in general. The positive feedback and interest shown in trade shows is understandable especially when one looks at the statistic of 85 million visitors divided between averages of four thousand trade shows in 1994 alone.

Why are trade shows advantageous to small businesses? Let's say that a forty-four percent of the economic entities participating in the business-to-business trade fairs are usually businesses whose workforce amounts to less than fifty people. Moreover, a hundred square feet booth at a trade show will cost you around \$1,300 and with some artistic marketing and creativity you can come up with a very interesting booth stand that attracts a large audience; just the boast small businesses need. When considering all the benefits you can reap from such exposure not to mention the quite affordable price, you will appreciate why a trade show can assist your business to grow. Additionally, with some imagination you can make your business look as legitimate and as valuable as other larger corporations.

If you make up your mind to participate in the next local trade show you will need to differentiate between two kinds of trade shows: One that is referred to as consumer trade show and the other is known as business-to business. Your objectives and business targets will determine which trade show you should attend at a point in time.

What is really in it for you?

There is a lot that you can gain out of trade shows. Besides exposure, you can look at trade fairs as having put your business on to a wagon and taken it for a ride around town for everyone to see what you have to offer. The ability to do this has added thumbs on establishing the presence of your business. If the right steps are taken, chances are that you will put your business in a very good light not to mention the head on sales that you can make from your very own booth.

Because trade shows offer you a face to face encounter with a large number of people, you can market your products as if you were on live televisions –only better as people can actually touch and see how your products work. This is not something that you can do every day through other marketing tools and thus covers a wider scale of potential customers because knowledge about your product or services is provided right there and then educating

consumers and answering all the questions they need to know. What better way to add a personal touch to your business than meeting your customers and clients yourself?

There are many other benefits that emerge from participating in trade shows. You can simply look at your business' role in them as a way to complement your current marketing campaign and taking it to a new level all together.

Not All That Glitters Is Gold

Even though participating in a trade show only requires minimum input and organization on your part, you have to keep in mind that just like a film can be unsuccessful so can your show. This is because trade shows are all about leaving an impression on the public. The common mistake made that can lead to lack of success is usually inexperience. However, you have dealt with customers before right? So that is a good starting point. Generally, careful exhibitors perform wonderfully well at trade fairs. Looking up some do-it-yourself and exhibition tips information would not hurt you. It will actually help you a lot especially if you investigate on what you are to expect at these events and study briefly what your competitors have done in the history of trade shows. If you are still unsure perhaps you could seek the advice of a professional designer or people with the right know-how so that they can assist you in putting up your booth and business concept together.

Although trade shows are popular for their widespread benefits, you need to be careful to select the trade show that is right for you as while some are cost-effective others may present a drain on your financial resources. Apart from this financial consideration you also need to pick the trade show that will meet your objectives as opposed to one that is just a waste of time. so if there is an option between a trade show that deals for example with health services and another one that is open to all businesses and you do not sell or provide any service that is related to health the trade show whose subject-matter is a general one would be a better choice for you even though you can pay a visit to the health trade show as a consumer or visitor. Therefore, taking a look at the type of market sector a trade show is targeting is important prior to committing your presence to it. Always look at the amount of traffic a trade show is meant to attract and match them to the expenses that you will incur to take part in it, especially if this involves a trade show that is taking place out of town.

The Role of Promotional Products in Trade Shows

We have already seen how the use of promotional products attracts people as the idea of a free gift is always welcome. Likewise, people visiting trade shows will be attracted to your booth if you have something for *free* to offer them. Studies have been carried out on the use of promotional products in trade shows and they have all reached the conclusion that adding

them as part of your trade show promotion will in fact direct traffic to your booth more than when you have nothing for free to offer them.

Many trade show participants make it a point to invite their customers and potential clients to visit their booth at the trade show to claim their free gift or to win a free gift if they participate in a competition that is being held at their booth during the XY trade show. Studies even show that those businesses that used promotional products with their trade show invitation and then matched this gift up with another promotional product at the trade show attracted more prospects and in a much faster way than those businesses that did not make use of any promotional products. Even better was the response of those who received a follow up promotional product. Over fifty percent of those invited can usually remember the invitation and the forty percent speak well of the company. A lower percentage actually responds to the invitation and visits your booth and over seventy five percent of the visitors usually look at your business in a favorable way.

Your role in trade shows?

Needless to say there are certain steps that you have to take in order to make your trade show presence effective. Consequently, you need to be prepared to organize, plan it and come up with a presentation of your business design. Organizing yourself and planning for the event requires you to check the costs, fill in registration forms, booking your space at the trade show, putting together the items for your display and the products that you want to put on show including ordering your promotional products. To this add a plan describing your own personal show, better referred to as your presentation at the show. What will you be doing to attract customers? What activities will you pursue to meet this end? In simple terms you will need to make targets that you want to achieve from participating in the trade show and these targets need to be measurable and clear for you.

Writing down the goals that you would like to reach by taking part in the trade show will keep you on the right track and will make your presence at the trade show goal oriented. So go ahead and write down your goals. What benefits do you want to reap from this trade show? Do you want to attract new clients and what type of clients do you want to attract? Do you want to deplete a product that is no longer so much on demand or do you want to promote a new one? Do you want to make sales at the trade show or do you want customers to visit you at your business premises? And by how much do you want to increase your sales? Only when you answer questions like these that you can start planning how you are going to achieve the set goals.

Additionally, you would not have made the most of your trade show if you do not follow up your orders, your new customers' database and the promotional gifts that you promised them. Despite the fact that trade shows bring your way a lot of traffic and exposure, it would be futile if you put on the kettle to make your prospects a cup of coffee if you let the water burn up. Do not wait long to follow up orders, promises of delivery of promotional products, to carry out post-trade show house to house or at your premises demonstrations and to send a follow up thank you to your trade show booth visitors. You should follow up any orders and interest shown in purchasing your products by a phone call and you could also hold a small get together in the form of a party. Usually, it is best to include a promotional product with your 'thank you' letter and once again send a business card, a catalogue or other informational material and send these to all those who have visited your booth and left their contact details for you to follow up on. Save these new contacts to your current clients' database and include them in your sequential marketing campaign. Eventually, if you keep in touch with your trade show visitors, they will surely appreciate it and will most certainly welcome your invitation to visit you at your next trade show. The bottom line to your success is to keep marketing your products and services constantly and if you follow up your visitors and customers with a token of appreciation you will surely strengthen your public relations strategy as well as business networks.

Follow up should not be solely limited to your customers and trade show visitors but you should also show your appreciation towards your staff. They too should be invited to a get together party. While the main aim is to thank your staff for their support at the trade show you should have another objective in mind: Drill and elicit your staff's opinions and ideas about what worked, how they felt, any difficulties encountered and what would they have changed. After all your staff just like you have experienced the trade show and may have formed their own personal opinion about your performance. Whether their feedback is positive or negative, note each comment down and learn from it so you can have a cleaner and smoother trade show exhibition next time round.

Who Will Be Representing You At The Trade Show?

One of the main issues that you also have to take into consideration when you decide to take part in a trade show is the number of people who will be representing you at the trade show. These people can be your workers, your partners, your family and friends. Even though you may think that you can look after the trade show booth all on your own, an extra hand is always a smart choice for many reasons.

Among these reasons you can find the delivery of a faster service at your end. Imagine being on your own and having a large amount of traffic visiting your booth. Don't you think that with so many booths to see most of the people will get tired of waiting for you to finish providing

information to the person in front of you? This means that if you have an extra pair of hands or two of them, if not more, you will not miss out on potential customers. You are also keeping an eye on your products, something which you cannot really always do if you are busy explaining some details to the persons in front of you. Additionally, trade shows can be long and you will be tired after a while of dealing with all those people and you don't want to give them the wrong impression if you show them you are tired or irritated. Do you? And what about your bathroom break? Who is going to look after your booth while you are away for your personal needs? Thus, these few reasons should explain to you why it is important to get an extra pair of hands to assist you at the trade show.

In reality you should have a type of division of labor strategy whereby some of the people that are assisting you in your trade show have different types of duties. Some of them could write down orders, others could provide an explanation about your current offers and products whilst others can help you stock and entice walkers by to visit your booth.

Always remember the objectives why you are participating in this trade show. Therefore, your staff or people you choose should be able to assist you in meeting these targets. Hence, you need to select customer friendly people who have a lot of knowledge about your products. You also need to call a meeting or two prior to the trade show to motivate your trade show duty staff. If necessary, train them to build excellent conversational skills with your visitors and explain in detail your current promotional offers. A rehearsal of what can happen at the trade show is also advisable so that your staff will be psychologically prepared for what to expect. Ask your staff about concerns they have at being on duty at the trade show and make sure that you come up with a solution even if this takes place together as team with regards to what to do should a particular situation present itself.

The Location of Your Business at the Trade Show

Now that you have selected the trade show that complements your business objectives and now that you have booked your space at the trade show, there is more that you can do to help you get the gist of where your business will be located.

Where your business is situated on the floor plan of the trade show and how big is it? What other type of booths and businesses are surrounding your own exhibition? Preferably you should go for one that is far away from your competitors. Do you reckon the location of your booth to be one that gets a large audience or a small one? Look into the traffic element and make sure that yours is one that receives a high amount of traffic its way. Additionally, you should know about whether there will be electrical sockets, water or other utilities in the vicinity?

Because most likely than not the people managing the trade show will ask you for your preferred location on the trade floor plan, the burden to be in a position where there is likely to be a high traffic is on you. It is for this reason that you need to browse for information regarding the location space as where your booth spot is situated at the trade show can determine whether you reach your objectives or otherwise fail to meet the desired target.

There are basically four types of locations: The inline, the perimeter, the island and the end cap. If you have been placed in the corner slot you will be having two directions of traffic to your booth and this is usually referred to as the inline position. If you register late for the trade show, are taking place in the trade show for the first time or if you are a small business, you are most likely to end up with the perimeter location which has two traffic directions leading to your booth. Attracting eight traffic directions and considered a prime location in any trade show, the island location is usually reserved for businesses that are regular exhibitors at the trade show or large businesses. The end cap is the second best location as it will direct six traffic directions to your booth. Again being a prestigious position the end cap location is also reserved for big corporations.

How to Go About Your Exhibit and Booth Display

Now that you can understand the difference between the four types of locations in a trade show and once you know where your spot is located, you can actually start preparing for the presentation of the booth. Prior to getting started you should brainstorm and write down a checklist of items, tools and accessories that you should have available at trade show. This check list can include the following: Your promotional products, brochures, catalogues, sample products, order forms, decorations, markers, pencils, pens, tape scissors, stick, pins, table cloths, a first aid box, a cash box or cash register with change in case of sales, V.A.T., receipts book, labels and price tags, business cards, calculator, water and staplers among many other items that are necessary to have at your disposition in order to ensure that you keep your booth exhibition running smoothly and that enable you to circumvent any inconvenience, accident or faulty material in case this type of situation arises.

Planning should also take into consideration how you are going to attract your audience by making your booth as attractive as possible.

There are a variety of booth displays that you can choose from. You should speak to the people managing the hall prior to selecting the type of display that you need as these can provide you with some color coded drapes and other material, especially if your booth display is going to be inside the main halls rather than outside. However, the availability of these materials is usually reserved for those businesses that have the best locations. Still, you should investigate what the management of the trade show or of the hall can offer you. Additionally, if your

participation in a trade show is not a one time off, you may come on top if you actually purchase your own booth display which usually bears your own personal touch to re-use it time and time again. Alternatively, you can opt for rentals which due to the fact that they are simple in their design, you will need to add some creative work to it to make it look more attractive.

Among the different types of booth displays that you can opt for you can find the back wall, side rails and drapes display. If you are really looking for a simpler option than you should go for portable pop-up or table-top exhibits. These are the simplest forms of displays because they generally require around quarter of an hour to be set up saving you all the stress and waste of time that other types of displays can bring. Furthermore, they are quite affordable and you can find different types and sizes from different manufacturers. Basically, these portable displays are foldable and have accessory parts that can be attached and removed with ease.

A more costly display is what we refer to as modular exhibits. They are costly because more often than not they require freight services to be brought in to the trade show. Since the panels of modular exhibits are made of panels, you can choose from a range of finishes from standard to matte all the way to laminated panels. The attraction of modular panels is that they give a somewhat personalized look to your display while at the same time making it look more extravagant and valuable than other displays.

Otherwise, if you really want to put the identity of your business out there you can always create your own custom-made booth display. This is however the most expensive type of display and usually requires you to invest in transport costs. If you run a carpentry business and want to make the most of your trade show booth, creating your own custom-made display allows you to add another floor to your booth. This is especially helpful when your products such as wardrobes, beds and tables take a lot of your booth space as this will allow you to put on show a few more products than you otherwise could using other forms of displays.

Selecting and putting together your display can say a lot about your business. If you have your logo for example on your display, it will show all people attending that come your way that you are a professional business and take your work very seriously. Hand in hand with this your display should send out a very important message: *Because your business is a professional one your services or products are in high demand.*

No matter the type of display you opt to go for, they key element in making your booth meet your objectives is by looking at it from your target market's perspective. What do you think your prospective customers will want to see? What will they like and what will generate interest in them to actually come and pay a visit to your booth? Of course your booth has to be both smart and visible. Smart implies that it has to look clean and neat. A carelessly set up display will say million of words about your business and most likely in a negative way. Your

booth has also to be visible and this means that the overall design and display have to be transparent and topic oriented enough to send the idea of what your booth is all about without any effort on the mind of the traffic headed in the direction of your booth. Thus, the purpose of your booth and consequently that of your business has to be clear to potential customers. If your purpose is unclear or difficult to decipher chances are that the traffic heading towards your booth will find it somewhat a challenging task to understand what both your booth and your business are about and the easiest way for them would be to give your booth a miss and you don't want that.

Apart from clearly expressing the purpose of what your business stands for, there are other tactics that you can use to generate interest in people. As in most stages of marketing, creativity is a fundamental aspect for a successful campaign. Add knowledge to your trade show exhibit strategy and you are on the right track to attracting your target market in your direction.

But how exactly can you make your presence at the trade show attractive? The underlying basis of a successful trade show presence is *communication*. Therefore, the more you allow your customers to interact with you or your staff the better your exposure and the more your success in reaching these goals. Of course you cannot just stand there and wait for them to interact with you but just like in general marketing principles you need to make your products or rather your booth desirable to them. And how can you make it desirable to them? You can make your presence at the trade show more desirable by using marketing psychology and promotional products. So provide them with free demonstrations, run competitions and contests or allow your traffic to interact with your business through some fun games. Use rewards or prizes for filling up a customers' feedback forms. This will increase your customers' database since the information participants enter to make them eligible for the prize can be used to follow up on them by constant reminders through sequential mailings, emails, invitations, promotions and the like.

Promotional products will also imprint a memory in to your visitors' mind that they have actually gotten a free gift from your business. As explained before promotional products add to your marketing strategy and they act as a constant reminder that your business is out there available for when your prospects need it.

If you are putting on show products, flyers or other means of information as well as perhaps questionnaires leading to free customers' feedback, these products are usually best placed at eye level. You can also categorize your products with neat, clear and legible labels. Add price tags to them. This will save you time explaining to customers how much your products cost and also saves you from problematic situations whereby some members of the public simply grab

your object and go thinking that you are offering a product for free due to the fact that it has no price tag on it.

To your display add promotional products, prizes and other items that you are willing to give away. Again labeling this section will not only make it clear to your traffic audience that this stuff can be won or is for free but it will also attract more prospects due to its competitive and free gift or prize appeal. Since there will be other businesses or better competitors working in the same industry or market as you, you need to ensure that the prizes, promotional products and the overall display appearance of your booth speaks professional quality. Hence, at trade shows you can up your game by using slightly more valuable prizes and promotional products such as kitchenware, jewelry, video or pc games and other electronics as well as well presented gift baskets.

Due to the reason that you want to your business to appear as professional as possible and that your products are in high demand and despite the much needed booth space you should not fill all your display. On the contrary, leave some space where there is a label appertaining to a certain product to show that your products are on high demand. Alternatively, mark some items sold out. If people query about the product give them your card together with some promotional products and ask them to visit your shop, warehouse or office as you will soon restock after the trade show. What are you achieving by all this? You are using marketing psychology to tell you customers that your products or services are so in demand that you have been too busy to find the time to re-order or to re-stock. You are also sending the message across: *You better visit me now as chances are I will run out on other offers too.* Indeed this tactic makes the public act and come to your booth or business to ensure that they are not missing out on any opportunities.

Regardless of your *empty shelf* or *sold out label* tactic⁷, you will need to ensure that you have more than enough stock, especially in relation to flyers, business cards, price and products or services lists as well as brochures. Usually these marketing materials serve two purposes: They tell your customers about your products and services, saving you time in a rush hour as well as provide them with your contact information. If the traffic is too busy and do not have the time to listen about your products or services, you can always hand a flyer or a brochure out to them to read from the comfort of their home. Likewise you need to stock up on order forms, catalogues and receipts if you intend on increasing sales at the trade show and of course if this is permissible on the occasion.

Other tips for a successful trade show would include:

- Start promoting your attendance at the trade show before the scheduled day as this covers around eighty percent of traffic to your booth and you stand to lose out if you do not make your participation known in the trade show before its due date;
- You should always accompany a letter of invitation by mentioning your booth number or reference as well as contact details, special trade show offers and include a promotional item with the promise of a potential price or gift for attending your booth at the trade show. This pre-trade show promotion will build a sense of desire to be part of your exhibition and one of the winners or beneficiaries of the offer;
- Your invitation need not be a traditional letter but you can use small container boxes, flyers or other original ideas to serve as your invites;
- Make use of your current contacts even for this promotion and use means such as over the counter, with receipt delivery, mail or the internet to inform your existing customers of your trade show offers, prizes as well as attendance;
- Always attach a form with your invitation letter that will encourage customers to visit your booth by depositing it in your prize competition box that will be available at the trade show;
- For a better pre-trade show marketing phase ask the people managing the trade show for a list of regular attendees and include them in your marketing promotion;
- For whatever activity you are organizing at your booth always send a token that enables the attendees to participate by using these token at your trade show booth;
- Make important information visible on your booth or display;
- Use food or beverages at your booth;
- Have items for children such as balloons, colors, inflatable balls;
- Have a good supply of promotional products handy;
- All visitors should go home with a useful promotional product so that they can remember your business;
- Promotional products of a higher value bring in your way more sales;
- Determine what promotional products are *useful*. Mugs, pencils, notepads, pens and diaries for example are useful;

- Decide if you want your promotional products to stand out of the rest and if this is the case use new, '*must get my hands on them*' and unusual types of promotional products. This will attract more customers to your booth;
- Make use of artistic pictures, inflatable items, flash lights and soft music or run video commentaries to make your booth more attractive (apply this depending on your type of business);
- Offer a complimentary service such as a quick three to five minutes neck or foot message or a quick facial or face message and many other simple leisure activities that will get your visitors to spend more time in your booth;
- Most likely visitors have been attracted to your booth because of the promotional products that you have to offer but you also want your visitors to have *a look* at your products or services. A way to do this is to make visitors' walk to your promotional a sightseeing tour. In fact, by placing the promotional products at the inner part of your booth, visitors will have to walk by and therefore lay their eyes on your products or services;
- Mention at the pre and during trade show stage that the offers, products or promotional products are for a limited time only or make it a point to send the message across that your stock is limited;
- With your letter of invitation send a promotional product that is part of a larger set and your visitors may claim the remaining of the set once they have visited your booth at the trade show;
- Don't leave ordering your flyers, brochures or promotional products and other stock at the last minute because you need to have these readily available at the trade show. Imagine promising visitors a promotional product such as the second part of the set and once they visit your booth you cannot keep your part of the deal. Failing to order the things on time can lead to very negative consequences to your business;
- Better stock up some extra products or items than run out of them as each time you fail to pass on your items or sell your products it is a missed opportunity;
- Know where all utilities are especially if you need electricity to make your television function, your music or lights on.
- Know how to use your gadgets and rehearse using them prior to the show to make up on time for any faults you may encounter;

- Prepare a list of supplies, accessories and must have items for the trade show and make sure that you double check that you have packed them and that you have actually brought them along.

The Day of the Trade Show

Again one of the most fundamental of basics is to think ahead and arrive at the trade show early and in sufficient time to prepare your booth or where allowed prepare everything on the eve of the opening of the trade show. When calculating the time need for the setting up of your booth you should also take into consideration some extra time that allows you to make a trip to and back from your store just in case you have forgotten something of fundamental importance.

Once your booth is all set up and ready to receive the visitors, it would be a good exercise if you take a look at it not from your own personal view but from that of prospective clients. Is your booth attractive to them? Are your promotional products, offers, price tags and documentation such as flyers, brochures and forms visible and readily available and placed in a strategic way as discussed earlier? If your visitors walk in to your booth will they knock over the stand you have with all your documentation. If yes, walk in to your booth as if you are a visitor and push the stand out of the way in a way that it is still easily visible to visitors but allowing your visitors to walk in to your booth without brushing against the stand. Other things to take into consideration would include whether your booth talks clearly about the business it represents and whether there is enough space for your assistants to be able to walk your visitors through your stand. Additionally, did you leave enough space for your cash point and are the products easy to see at eye level? You will need to take all this in consideration because now is the time that you put all your planning and trade show marketing strategies in to action. This phase is like double checking your booth and whether it fits into your plans as well as if your booth is applying all the strategies you originally had in mind.

Also leave some time to have a look around at other booths and displays just in case you notice that you can improve on something that other businesses have already thought of. How do you think your booth and display compares to that of the surrounding businesses? If you think you could benefit by adding or doing something to your display now is the time to call on those extra hands and ask them to take over until you or one of your staff bring in the item or re-design the display accordingly. If possible to network with other exhibitors, then take the opportunity and see how you can help each other through the networking opportunities available.

If you have completed the tasks above take some quality time to yourself, take a few deep breaths and relax. The visitors of your booth as well as your business would highly benefit if the

host is confident and at ease rather than a stress case. An agitated representative won't complement all the efforts that you have made so far to make your booth look and deliver what it is meant to. Thus, you should also make room for time where you and your assistants can relax.

Customer Care at the Trade Show

We have already discussed the importance of having on board staff that are pleasant and customer friendly. You should have taken the time to explain your promotions and to train your staff in customer care. Both you and your staff should by now be at ease and ready for your exhibition.

Now that people have started visiting your booth you should follow some of the tips below to ensure that your presence at the trade show runs smoothly:

- ✓ Smile at all times and at all costs regardless of how many questions your visitors ask you without the indication that they will eventually buy your products or hire your services and regardless of how annoying they can turn out to be. You need to send across a positive connotation to your business. Even if they visitors do not purchase or book anything at your booth make sure they go home remembering your friendly attitude rather than remembering your irritation, impatience or how uncomfortable you have made them feel. Making your business looked at in a positive light is half of the battle;
- ✓ Talk to your visitors as much as possible. Start with a simple greeting such as *"hello my name is"* and follow it up by an introduction about your business. This generates awareness about what you do and also gets people listening;
- ✓ Put on your sense of humor in the appropriate dose;
- ✓ Make sure that you and your staff take regular short breaks to freshen up before resuming communication with visitors;
- ✓ Inform visitors about your promotion, competition and contests and invite them to participate by handing to them the relevant form;
- ✓ Ask them about what they need;
- ✓ Show them what you have to offer;
- ✓ Ensure your provide your visitors with constant demonstrations of your products;
- ✓ Be able to answer their questions;

- ✓ Ensure that you inform them about the possibility to make onsite purchases or orders;
- ✓ Be thankful and show your appreciation to visiting customers;
- ✓ Pay attention to your body language. Are you slouching? Are you walking with an attitude as if you do not want to be there? Is your staff sitting down? Sitting down should only be allowed in the eventuality of a one to one with visitors.
- ✓ Be helpful, approachable and nice to people who visit your booth;
- ✓ Keep your spirit up even if you did not get the desired number of visitors to your booth;
- ✓ Be confident and walk out of your booth and engage into a conversation with walkers by. Invite them to take a look inside your booth;
- ✓ Never overload them with information but rather describe the solutions that your business can provide to them;
- ✓ Ask questions that require a brief answer such as a *'maybe'*, *'sure'*, *'yes'* or a *'no'*.
- ✓ If your visitors do not want to participate in any competition, promotion or offer go ahead and give them your brochures, flyers and business cards as well as price lists in the event that a need arises for your products and while doing this take their information so that you will be able to inform them about future offers and use the marketing schemes and tactics to draw them to your business.

Chapter 12: The Role of Professionals in Your Marketing Campaign

There are various levels of professional expertise that you might need to take in to account when undertaking a marketing campaign. Some of these will only ask for a membership fee whereas others might stretch your budget a bit.

We have already discussed the possibility of recurring to marketing and business promotion experts as well as advertisement organizations and groups all over the country. We have also taken in to consideration recurring to professional advert companies to assist you in drawing up your marketing plan as well as in establishing the strategy you will be using in your marketing campaign.

Factors that should be taken into consideration when determining whether you will be recurring to professional help or whether you will be running the marketing campaign on your own include the financial aspect which mainly deals with how elastic the budget that you are ready to dedicate to your marketing campaign is; your confidence, human resources and marketing knowhow. Perhaps you will opt to use professional assistance for the larger scaled projects of your marketing campaign and deal with other low budget and manageable aspects such as designing flyers, sending mail both online and through post on your own.

While this decision is entirely up to you, there are certain professionals that you might need to consult with in the long run and better yet even at the beginning. Some of these professionals would include financial and legal advisors. While financial projection and cutting your losses are important issues to you; you might wonder why one would include legal advisors in one's marketing campaign. If this sounds like you, then you should begin to understand that once you start a marketing campaign you are starting to build relationships with other people. As a product or service provider you will be responsible to abide by the various consumer and financial laws that regulate your relationship with that of your clients or prospects. Let us take in to consideration for a moment an important principle that we discussed in the chapter about the advertising basics. We had mentioned the importance of keeping your word. This was done in the context of credibility where we said that your message and offers have to be credible. If they are not credible people will not bother trying out your products or services and that is a loss in itself. Now let us be practical for a moment and remember that not all people view a particular message in one and the same way. Imagine, that even if your message was not so credible or even if it were credible and you successfully attract traffic to your business but you subsequently fail to provide them with what you promised them in your marketing campaign in the very beginning, then there is a high probability that you risk facing legal action against you due to the fact that your marketing campaign has misled the particular individual.

Alternatively, imagine getting a customer's complaint about a defective product or an unsatisfying service and you are currently promoting that product wide and large to general public out there. How do you think a legal action and the related bad publicity will influence your marketing campaign? Will it be in a good or in a bad light? Bad. No doubt there.

This small example out of the variety of problematic events that you might face when running your business with particular reference to your marketing campaign is the very reason why seeking the legal advice of a professional would be extremely helpful even prior to commencing your marketing campaign. This will ensure that you understand the fine line of what constitutes misleading advertisement for example. Getting professional legal feedback about internet marketing such as anti-spam laws, consumers' rights and your obligations as a service or product provider can save you a lot of time and money not to mention the fact that it will safeguard the reputation of your business which you have worked so hard to build. You do not want your business to suffer out of let's say ignorance of your legal or financial obligations which are of course two issues that need to be taken into consideration by any diligent business owner, director or manager.

This book has put forward a high standard of marketing experience for you to understand but the advice given is specifically related about marketing strategies and thus you should also carefully think about obtaining some legal and financial advice together with other economic and market studies. This will ensure an overall bullet proof marketing campaign not to mention the peace of mind that you are doing everything by the book.

Despite the fact that approaching a professional is recommended, you need not worry. Once you understand the legal dynamics of your business, it will not be difficult to keep your business operation running as a legitimate one. Take spamming for example. Although all the spam mail that is going around somewhat decreases your chances of getting more of your e-mails opened or recognized as legitimate ones by your email service provider, recent legislation has put a lot of effort in order to support people like you whose emails have a lawful and legitimate purpose. Therefore, the anti-spam laws are more focused on stopping spammers than from stopping you from running your own legal marketing campaign.

You need however to be aware that these laws vary depending on the state that you reside in and they might be different in another state where you used to reside or a new state where you intend to run your business. Looking at the main reference points that each laws have in common would be a good start to keep your business operation a legitimate one. For instance, a common standard acceptable under all laws involved would be that you are perfectly safe in sending emails to people that you have already come in contact with and these people would include people such as your existent customers, those people who have given their consent in receiving feedback about your business including those people who have passed on their

contact information so that you can follow them up or people who have requested information. It also includes people who have for example willingly participated in a market study that you have carried out including the taking part in surveys and the filling in of questionnaires. The issue of consent revolves itself around the fact that you have made people aware that you intend to use their email addresses either for promotional reasons and to follow up a query among other legitimate reasons. Again it is necessary that you are clear with these people as to why you need their email address. If you are not clear then how far their permission to be contacted and the extent to which their emails can be used is questionable and might lead to breach of related laws.

Thus, it is always safe to make customers and prospects tick the box as to whether they wish to receive further information on the contact information provided. This makes sure that you know where you are getting all your contact information from. Looking through your current client database and taking out addresses that you recognize as a potential threat due to the fact that you don't know where the main source originated is another extra precaution that you can take.

Again just like we discussed before it is important that anything you do shows an honest business approach and therefore anything contained in your emails including your contact information, promotional offers as well as subject line should be a true reflection of what your business stands for as well as a reflection of what you are ready to offer in return for people making use of your business.

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