

Local Marketing Ideas

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Introduction

The ideas in this booklet are intended to help businesses that operate in a specific geographic area or areas. Rather than national newspaper ads and brand-building TV spots, you'll find small scale ideas which focus on playing to the strengths of a local business – being personally known, and part of the community.

Pre-requisites for successful marketing are that you have a product or service which is of adequate quality (preferably a lot more than adequate) and that there are people who want and can afford to buy it. No marketing will make up for a bad or unwanted product or service over the long term. Market research is necessary to find out whether there is a need or a market for your proposed product or service.

Disclaimer

The ideas in this booklet are supplied for your inspiration only, and are not fully-formed marketing plans. It is your responsibility to research any idea before you proceed with it. Legal issues and regulations may vary widely in different locations. Earnings or profits from any business depend on your actions and the results of any of these ideas are not guaranteed. No claims are made for the accuracy or applicability of the information to any specific situation. You should consult with your own advisors before applying these ideas to a business of your own.

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Your Six-Step Marketing Process

Step 1: Identify your best prospects

Unless you're Microsoft, you can't afford to market to "everybody". Not only that, but if you do, most of "everybody" won't be interested in what you're selling. You will get much better results in terms of return on time, effort and cash expended on your marketing if you focus on the people who most want, and can afford, your product or service.

Your prospects can be described in a number of different ways.

Geographic factors

- Geographic location
- Urban vs suburban vs rural
- Climate

Demographic factors

- age
- gender
- family size
- family life cycle stage
- income
- occupation
- education
- socioeconomic status
- religion
- sexual orientation
- nationality/race
- language

Psychographic factors

- personality (ambitious, contented, fear oriented, etc)
- life style (rich & famous, green, family oriented etc)
- values (greed, environmentalism, etc)
- venturesomeness (home body, traveler, etc)

How would you describe the people who will buy your product or service in terms of these factors, and others which apply to your specific customers and prospects?

Step 2: Work out how to reach your prospects

Ask your existing customers to tell you:

- what they watch
- where they spend their time
- what they listen to
- what they read
- who they talk to

...and that will tell you how to reach them, and others like them, with your marketing.

If you don't yet have customers, you're back to market research. Talk to people who buy from others what you plan to sell: talk to other people who sell what you plan to (in other geographic areas, so they don't feel that you'll be competition): ask questions and search for answers in government offices and publications, reference libraries, and online.

You can also research the audiences of various advertising media (print, radio, TV etc) directly by asking the media outlets.

Here are some examples of ways to reach your prospects:

If your prospects are...	Reach them through...
Fashion-conscious teen girls	Mall displays, radio ads, music giveaways, clothing stores...
Young men	Auto-related businesses, sports teams, bars, colleges...
Men 60+	Hunting and fishing clubs and stores, barber shops, golf courses, retirement investment programs...
High income earners	Direct mail to specific postal codes, golf courses, airport/airplane ads...
Business owners	Chamber of Commerce and other business associations, service clubs...
Renters	Apartment managers, property rental agencies, flyers at apartment complexes...
Gardeners	Garden centers and nurseries, garden clubs, garden magazines and newspaper columns...

Step 3: Identify the problem, need or want of your prospect that your product/service addresses

Your prospect must have a problem you can solve, or a need or want you can fill, for them to buy from you. What is that problem, need or want?

- If you're a massage therapist, the problem may be back pain, stress, repetitive strain injuries, etc.
- If you sell ice cream, the problem may be hunger, boredom, feeling too hot, wanting to be social with a group, etc.

Sometimes you may have to satisfy the needs of several customers at once!

- If you write books, your customers are the publisher you sell the book to, the bookstore who sells the book to the public, and the reader who finally buys it. They all have different needs which your book has to address.
- If you provide academic tutoring to high school students, your customers are the students and their parents, and sometimes the school and teachers as well.

Step 4: Decide what you're going to tell them

Word-based marketing (whether print, radio or internet) is composed of several sections: the headline, the body, the offer, and the call to action. The Copywriting section below goes into more detail on how to write your copy, but before writing there's some thinking to be done.

Once you know who you're selling to, and what their problem, need or want actually is, think about the features of your product or service, and bring out the benefits that result from the features and address your prospect's problem. You want to give your prospects the answer to their question: "What's In It For Me?" (WIIFM)

Feature	Example Benefits
57 mpg gas consumption	Lower transportation costs, visit the gas station less often, fewer greenhouse gas emissions, use less resources, feel more "green" and virtuous
Argon-filled, double-wall glazing units	Lower heating costs; warmer, more comfortable house; less noise intrusion

100% money-back guarantee	Feel safe buying the item, fewer doubts about quality
Waterproof paper (in a notepad)	Can be used in wet locations, no danger of losing your data or notes, paper will not go moldy when left damp
Native-speaker pronunciation samples (in a language-learning product)	More confidence in speaking the new language, no risk of embarrassing mispronunciations

Step 5: Create your marketing plan

All the thinking and writing you've done so far now feeds into your decisions on how to execute your marketing. Bearing in mind that you want to reach your prospects repeatedly, preferably in more than one way, decide which methods will reach your prospects most effectively, how often you'll use them, and how much you plan to spend.

For example:

Jan	Display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 5 blocks surrounding store, press releases re upcoming special event	\$125
Feb	Larger display classified in local paper each week, follow-up calls for press releases, radio ad 5x daily for 1 week before special event, ¼ page flyer for special event through doors in 10 blocks surrounding store, posters on bulletin boards for special event	\$425
Mar	Display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 5 blocks surrounding store, press releases re charity event sponsorship next month	\$125
Apr	Display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 5 blocks surrounding store, phone follow-up to press releases, sponsor local charity event	\$300
May	Display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 5 blocks surrounding store	\$125
June	Larger display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 10 blocks surrounding store, "School's Out" promotion, posters on bulletin boards for promotion	\$250

July	Display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 5 blocks surrounding store	\$125
Aug	Larger display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 10 blocks surrounding store, radio ad 5x daily for 1 week during promotion, "back-to-school" promotion	\$425
Sep	Display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 5 blocks surrounding store	\$125
Oct	Larger display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 10 blocks surrounding store, Thanksgiving promotion, radio ad 5x daily for 1 week during promotion	\$425
Nov	Display classified in local paper each week, ¼ page flyer through doors in 5 blocks surrounding store	\$125
Dec	Larger display classified in local paper weekly, ¼ page flyer through doors in 10 blocks surrounding store, Christmas promotion, radio ad 5x daily for 4 weeks, posters on bulletin boards for promotion	\$1100

Step 6: Test and measure

How do you know which parts of your marketing are working and which aren't?

There are some forms of marketing where you can directly measure exactly how many sales you get as a result of the marketing: telemarketing where you make the sale on the spot over the phone; direct mail where you receive an order by mail as a result of your mailing; some forms of internet marketing where people buy directly from your website or email promotion; coupons you give out which include codes to tell you how they were distributed.

For other forms of marketing like flyers, posters and radio and display ads which urge prospects to visit your store, you have to ask them when they come in how they heard about you, and record the answers. Over time, you'll see patterns: once you do, you'll be able to focus more marketing money and energy on the ways that work and cut out the ways that don't. You do have invest the time first, though: when you are starting from scratch it takes time for people to get familiar and comfortable with your presence, remember you when they need what you offer, and get around to buying from you.

Copywriting

Your headline is critical. If you don't get your prospect's attention with your headline, nothing else in the ad matters.

Types of headlines include:

- Direct: state your message as clearly and directly as possible.
- News: make an announcement of something new or improved.
- How-To: offer a solution to a problem your prospects have
- Reason-Why: "11 reasons why you should own product xxx"
- Testimonial: "Mr locally-known says XXXX helped us to..."

Write lots of headlines. Write several of each possible type. Write more than you think you need. Write more than you think you can.

Focus your headline on your target prospect. This way you attract the attention you want, from the people who are likely to respond, and don't waste your time following up leads from people who are not really prospects.

Your headline should answer the prospect's question: What's In It For Me? (WIIFM)

Don't try to trick people into reading the ad with your headline. Feeling tricked doesn't inspire trust in your prospects.

Remember AIDA: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. Your headline gets the attention. Body copy inspires interest and desire. Your offer is the call to action. All four need to be present in your ad.

Show your prospects that you understand their biggest problem. Then show them how your product or service solves the problem.

Benefits, benefits, benefits make the sale. The reason for a feature is to provide a benefit, so tell your prospects what benefits they'll receive.

Don't use competitors names in your ads. All it does is give them free publicity, especially if they have better name recognition than you. Your prospect may remember their name instead of yours!

Include both emotional (benefit) and rational (feature) reasons to buy in your ad. Each will appeal to different types of prospect.

Guarantees, warranties and testimonials all increase trust. Your prospects won't buy if they don't trust you.

Always tell the prospect what you want them to do. Call, drop by, write, email, visit your website: make it crystal clear.

Positioning

“Position” is the image your prospects have of your product or service, compared to the competition. It’s a perception that will happen in your prospects’ minds whether you do anything to influence it or not – so you may as well be pro-active and decide how you want your prospects to see you and your product. What kind of identity do you want them to see?

Some ways to position a product or service...

- Original
- Toughest
- Disposable
- Low price, thrifty, economical
- High quality
- For one gender
- For a specific age group
- Solves a problem category
- Ethnic approach
- Social class
- Life-style
- Professional
- “For dummies”
- For smart people
- In 2nd place
- Promotes certain values
- For a body type
- For a time of day
- Time of year
- International
- Country of origin
- Regional
- Non-violent
- Environmentally safe
- Green
- Socially conscious
- 'in', hip, fashionable, cool
- Local
- Athletic, sporty

Word of Mouth or Referrals

#1 most basic requirement is: UNDERPROMISE AND OVERDELIVER. Make your customers or clients happier than they expected.

“Share with a friend” techniques involve giving a customer 2 of something of value, with one of them to be shared with someone else. This can be done in many ways:

- package items together as “2 for the price of 1”, with a card suggesting that the second one be given away
- give a customer a free sample and a gift certificate for another sample to give to a friend
- send 2 discount cards to a customer, one for them and one for a friend
- send two “money-off” coupons similarly
- Have a drawing from a valuable item and give tickets to your customers to give to their friends. The friends have to bring in the ticket with their name and address to be included in the draw.

Give feedback to your customers when they give you referrals. Say thanks, send a note or small gift (carefully: some people are not allowed to accept gifts), and let them know how the referral turned out. Often, you’ll get more referrals while giving feedback.

The two best ways to get referrals are:

1) give referrals. The more you give, the more you get (not necessarily from the same source, but it all evens out).

2) ask for them. Customers don’t think to give referrals if you don’t ask. When asking, be specific: ask for a specific type of person or associate – the customer will find it easier to remember someone who needs you.

If you have too many referrals, start passing them on to someone else who needs them. You’ll build goodwill with everyone involved (and who knows when they will pass business back to you in turn).

Cross-promote with other businesses which serve your prospects and customers. You endorse or recommend them to your customer list, and they recommend you to theirs.

If a customer or client says something good about you, seize the opportunity to get a testimonial. Ask if you can write it down and have them sign it. Get their permission to use it in your marketing.

Internet Marketing

Why would a local business use internet marketing?

- To let customers and prospects find information after hours on a website
- To keep in contact with customers and prospects using email (much cheaper and less work than using mail or telephone)
- To accept credit cards using Paypal online, even for a very small business with no merchant account
- To generate leads from local searches
- To display pictures, audio and video of your work
- To answer common questions using a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page
- To survey customers or prospects on their opinions
- To sell suitable products or services outside the local area, opening up a larger market

Integrate your online and offline marketing. All your offline documents – business cards, invoices, brochures, posters, flyers – should have your web address and email address as well as the usual phone number and mailing address or location. Radio, TV and PR efforts should also contain your online addresses.

If it's hard for a new prospect to trust you in the real world, it's many times harder online. Do everything you can with guarantees, testimonials, references, pictures etc to generate trust.

Use your website to capture every visitor's email address even if you don't sell from it. Offer something of value – information, a discount, a coupon – in exchange for their email address so that they "opt-in" to your mailing list. Always provide an option for them to opt out later.

Capture email addresses offline as well as online.

Popular items with web visitors include:

- Pictures, photos and graphics – of customers, projects, products
- Stories about your work or your customers
- "Top 10" or "hottest" lists, of your products or other related things
- FAQ pages

Include your contact information where site visitors can easily find it. One exception: instead of including your email address directly, where spammers can easily "harvest" it, use a submission form to let people contact you. If you are open regular hours, include those too.

Before your website is designed, by you or a professional designer, look for existing sites you like and use them as examples of what you want.

If you do customer surveys on your site, break the survey into chunks of a few questions at a time. Long pages make people give up. Very short surveys (just one question at a time) which change frequently can be a popular item with visitors.

Getting email through to your customers is getting more and more difficult. Anti-spam tools often flag anything commercial as spam, even if the receiver has requested it. Remind people to put your "from" address on their "allowed senders" list, if they use software of that type.

Your email subject line has to make the receiver want to open the email. It's the headline for the rest of the email, and tips for other forms of headline apply here too.

Print Advertising

Use pictures whenever you can. Best of all: photos with happy people using your product or service. If you can't show people using your product, at least have a pair of hands in the picture. Drawings are also good if photos aren't practical.

You can include pictures of: your product or part of it, someone using your product or service, before and after pictures, happy customers (with testimonials), and comparisons of your product with something similar.

Don't assume that bigger is better in newspaper and magazine ads. A full page ad will not necessarily pull twice as well as a half page, and so on down in size. Test to find the best ad size vs cost for you.

People need to see your marketing multiple times before they buy. You are better off spreading your ad budget over many small ads than fewer larger ones.

Radio Advertising

Where to air ads:

- Pick a station that your prospects listen to. You can get audience statistics and details from the station.
- Choose talk over music radio if possible, as people more often use music radio as “background” and will tune out your ads.

When to air ads:

- At a time when your prospects are listening
- At the same time each day (since people often listen at the same time)
- Repeatedly: prospects will only take action after hearing the ad 3 to 10 times

What to include:

- One focused idea, communicated directly and clearly
- A clear call to action, repeated at least three times

Items to be directly sold via radio ads should be priced between \$15 (to make ad cost worthwhile) and \$100 (about the maximum people will spend from a radio ad).

Rather than trying to sell directly from the ad, try using it to generate leads: offer a free demo, free tips, free estimate, free video etc that will do the job of actually selling your prospect.

Choose more shorter ads rather than fewer longer ads to get the most effect for you money.

Rather than pre-recording an ad, you can get the DJ to read your ad live. This can work especially well if you’ve sent a sample product and the DJ is genuinely enthusiastic about it.

Publicity and PR

Instead of a holiday party, use the money to support a local charity – and send a press release about it to local media. Or, use the party to raise money or donations for a good cause.

Press releases can include stories about:

- Employees with special or unusual volunteer activities or hobbies
- New inventions, products or store openings
- Free classes, demonstrations or seminars
- Contests
- Celebrity visits
- Solutions to current community problems
- Charity and special event participation
- Student involvement in your business
- Trends in your industry (especially as they affect your community)
- Weather tie-ins with your business
- How you're dealing with high fuel prices

If the newspaper publishes an article related to your product or business, write a letter to the editor agreeing, disagreeing, or adding information to what was reported.

Sponsor your own TV show on your local Community Access TV channel.

Write how-to articles for newspapers, newsletters and local web sites, including brief "filler" items like quizzes and "ten tips on..." pieces.

Including good-quality photos with your news release makes it more interesting and more likely to be picked up.

Special Offers

“Free with purchase” or “Free with signup” offers:

- Free consultation
- Free newsletter subscription
- Free reusable container (gift box or bag)
- Free house-label product
- Free planning checklist which relates to your product or service
- Free sheet of reminder or tip stickers
- Free long-distance or cellphone minutes card
- Free sample
- Larger gift with larger order

Bundle or package a set of your products or services together as a special deal.

Offer a trade-in on older models of hard goods eg cars, computers, sewing machines.

Offer a special deep discount on one product when they buy another product, or spend over a certain amount.

Give away a “club card” or “frequent buyer card” which offers a discount or a free offer with every X number of purchases.

Offer delayed billing: “no interest or payments for 6 months”. Many offers like this now add an up-front service charge which wipes out any interest savings for the customer and is not as attractive.

Offer a payment plan: “3 easy payments of \$xx.xx!”

Create a special “VIP Club” or special privileges for long time or high-spending customers. You can also encourage people to try new products or services by offering “Charter Member” status and discounts.

Offer to beat or match the competition’s prices. Don’t add too many conditions to the small print or your offer won’t be believed.

Give a set of discount cards or other freebies to local business owners to give to their employees and customers.

Outdoor Advertising

Display your business name, web address and phone number on your vehicle. You can have it painted on, made into a magnetic sign that you attach, or display a sign in a window where it doesn't obstruct your vision.

Go further and turn your whole vehicle into a billboard for your business.

If you drive an open-bed truck, make a 2-sided display board that fits the bed and use it as a movable billboard.

Park your advertising vehicle where lots of people will see it.

Pay someone else to carry your ad or sign on their vehicle.

Other vehicles to place signs or ads on: buses (inside and out), scooters (for rent?), boats, construction machinery, cargo containers, RV's, tourist rides e.g. horse carriages, rickshaws, etc.

If you're located where you can have an outdoor sign, make the most of it: use an attention getting headline as well as your business name and hours.

If you expect your sign to be read from a moving car make sure it's high contrast and the letters are big enough to be read: 1" high for every 25 ft of distance under ideal conditions.

Initiate and subsidize a "community bike" program and advertise your business on the bikes. For more on community bikes, see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_bicycle_program

Paint a mural on the side of your building, or sponsor a mural elsewhere, which includes a reference to your business.

Hire "protestors" to picket your place of business with approving signs.

Phone marketing

If you have a list of names to call, start at the end of the alphabet instead of the beginning. Most telephone salespeople start with A and never reach the Z's.

Dress to make your calls the same way you would to meet your prospects in person.

“Warm Call”, don't cold call. Mail a useful report, article or newspaper clipping first, then call to follow up to see if they got the information... and go on from there.

Listen for your prospect's problem, find out how bad it is, then tell how your product or service can solve the problem.

When you're on the phone, smile! Hang a mirror above the phone to remind you.

Whenever you get a call from a prospect or customer, make sure you get their contact details. Offer to send a free report, discount coupon or useful information if they give you their email or postal address.

Train everyone who might answer your phone in how to do so. Make sure they can give your customers and prospects service as good as you could yourself.

Manufacturing businesses

Any time you send out an invoice, packing list, product shipment or other outgoing item, include another offer, anything from a couple of lines on the invoice to a catalog.

When you create a new product, invite your regular customers (and the press) to preview and try out a sample. You'll get sales leads, great information on how the product is viewed and which selling points to emphasize, and maybe press coverage.

Offer tours of your plant to locals, especially schoolchildren, and to tourists (with the appropriate safety precautions and insurance, of course). Children will often do a great job of word-of-mouth marketing for you after a tour!

Encourage and sponsor your employees to use their work skills to benefit the community as well as you.

Combat the image of manufacturing as messy, smelly, dirty and bad for the environment. Do everything you can to be a good neighbor and protect the environment, and make sure everyone knows you're doing it.

Craft businesses

Make miniature, partial or sample versions of your crafts to give away or sell very cheaply.

Sell your crafts (wholesale or on consignment) through independent stores: galleries, gift shops, tourist shops, clothing stores, coffee shops, etc.

Teach people the basics of your craft and let them see how hard the expert reaches are – where you do your work. They will value your work more highly when they know what goes into it.

Team up with several other crafters to hold a "Home Craft Boutique" before a holiday.

Wear your craft items and carry plenty of business cards to give to people who ask where you got them. Be prepared to sell uniquely attractive items right off your own back!

Decorate a holiday tree for charity with your crafts.

Retail businesses

Use special offers to encourage more and larger purchases (see Special Offers page).

Regular sale events can backfire, as customers wait for items to go on sale instead of buying at the regular price. To combat this, make the sales you do have, unpredictable.

Work out a deal with a complementary business – one who targets the same customers you do – where you distribute flyers or offers for them and they distribute flyers or offers for you.

Combine forces with other stores in your area to put on a special event which will draw more traffic to all of you.

Run a “first in” gift offer where the first 50 or 100 customers into the store on a certain day get a free gift or special discount.

Learn as much as you can about your customers so that you can tailor offers to match their interests.

Offer to sign customers up at the checkout for your email newsletter or information sheet so that you grow a list of known customers to market to.

Hold a draw for your product or service. You’ll get useful prospect names from the entry forms if you make the prize something your prospects really want, not some unrelated big-ticket item.

Hold free or low-cost classes, seminars or workshops on how to use your products, or related to your services.

Create an annual award and publicize it. Encourage people to visit your store to vote for the winner of the award.

Show product demos – live or videos – on the sales floor.

Use window display opportunities in places other than your store – malls, other stores, airports, or large office buildings, for example.

Provide enough staff – and excellent customer training for your staff - so they can provide excellent customer service.

Loan your facilities to groups for meetings or events.

Spotlight a special customer as “Customer of the Month”.

Food Service Businesses

Restaurants, cafés, snack bars, coffee shops, bakeries etc...

Your print ads will get read much more often if you include a recipe, whether it's for one of your specialties or which uses one of your products.

Send customers home with samples – small servings of your best dessert, sauce or other specialty. Not only does this increase sales of what you're sampling, as customers buy a full serving on their next visit, but they may also share the samples with friends and bring you new patrons.

Trade a gift for the name and address of a friend – a gift certificate for a dessert or appetizer, for example. Then mail the friend a coupon or gift certificate for a free menu item, to encourage them to visit.

Name (or rename) a special dish after a valued customer. Have a special event to celebrate the naming and invite the customer to bring guests.

Do catering for community and charity events, using either the event site kitchen or a mobile kitchen. You'll expose your wonderful food to a whole new set of people who might otherwise never know of you.

Give out a small free recipe booklet related to your food products, with your address, menu, hours, etc. included. It'll be kept instead of thrown away, and referred to repeatedly.

Take part in "local eating" events: make one meal a week from local ingredients, buy ingredients from local producers regularly, and let everyone know you're doing it (and why).

Trades and Construction

Good work is its own advertisement – provided people know about it. Use word-of-mouth and referral techniques to turn satisfied customers into your best salespeople.

Display a sign on each job site.

Display pictures of completed jobs on a simple website with your contact information.

Market yourself based on quality and reliability, not price. There will always be shoddy-job cowboys who will undercut you on price, and customers who pick them – once. You want the customers who are willing to pay for a decent job.