

Small Businesses Identify Growth Strategies

While e-commerce and the Internet take hold as marketing mainstays, research shows that most small businesses use print materials to market themselves more than any other medium.

According to the United States Postal Service, studies confirm that consumers who interact with brands over multiple media channels display more loyalty and spend 30% more than those who shop using a single media channel.

Print communications are highly effective marketing tools because they can reach most any audience, can be customized, and are often retained for future reference. Following are key considerations when using print strategies:

Define marketing goals.

To implement a successful campaign, carefully plan your marketing efforts. What types of marketing have produced the best results in the past? Do you have existing marketing or identity elements such as color schemes, logos and graphic designs? Using these as part of your campaign can not only help save money, but create consistency and continuity to aid customer recognition and recall.

What are you trying to accomplish with your print communications? Introduce a new product or service? Boost seasonal sales? Appeal to a particular market niche? The more specific you can be, the easier it is to develop a strategy for achieving your goals. Efforts to simply “get our name out there” will not be as effective as those with a specific objective.

Identify your audience.

Who is the target for your information? How can you define your audience in terms of demographics (age, geographic location, gender, etc.) as well as psychographics (lifestyle)? What do you know about the audience’s needs and preferences? What kind of relationship do you currently have with the target audience? What type of relationship do you want to have?

This information will help you and your printer decide what type of materials will be most effective. For example, if you are targeting seniors, your marketing will vary greatly from what you use to reach *high school* seniors. Your message – what you say and how you say it – will be dramatically different.

Develop a campaign.

For marketing to be effective, a prospect must see or hear of your product or service multiple times. Marketing efforts that are part of a strategic, conscious campaign are more effective than those that are piecemeal or tactical in nature.

Understanding where your product or service is in the buying process will help you and your print professional determine how to best reach customers. In most cases, prospective buyers need time to consider your product or service. Typically, the buying process begins with building awareness, followed

by stimulating interest, urging evaluation and then trial. Ultimately, the goal, of course, is to gain a committed, repeat customer.

Evaluate your efforts.

In establishing your goals, define what you want to accomplish in measurable terms. Determine how you will evaluate the success of your marketing efforts early in the campaign. Do you want to track new customer inquiries? Test responses in new geographic areas? Track your success among a particular market segment?

As you can see, your next conversation with your marketing services professional should go far beyond paper selection, colors and quantity. Your communications partner should also be equipped to implement your marketing program through a full range of services including full-color printing, graphic design services, pre-press file preparation, bindery and finishing, mailing services, fulfillment, promotional products and more.

Smart businesses are using sources that can help them optimize their marketing efforts. And, that means more time for you to pay attention to the ink that really matters: staying in the black.