

## **Capital Area District Library - Marketing Your Business**

**Kevin Green, Executive Director, Lansing Principal Shopping District**

- 1. Marketing is a form of communication, which does not have to be expensive.**
- 2. Remember: You are an expert! You must believe in yourself and your business.**
- 3. Remember to surround yourself with creative people – host creativity parties.**
  - Invite your most creative friends and acquaintances to a party. Explain to them that you wish to start a business; expand a business; offer new products or services; and that they are one of the most creative people you know and that you would like their ideas and feedback. Provide handouts outlining your concept and/or problem. Start conversations or idea swapping. Serve food and beverages and keep the mood upbeat and festive. The name of my former consulting business “Sure-Fire Marketing” was suggested by a friend at a similar party.
- 4. Know who your ideal Target Market customer is.**
  - Target Market: A fairly homogeneous (similar) group of people to whom you want to market your product or service to. A bald headed person is not a target market customer for shampoo!
  - Peripheral Customers: Non-primary target market customers who can identify with some aspect of your primary target customer’s lifestyle and/or your marketing campaign. Mini-vans were designed for use by families. Small businesses (a peripheral market) found them ideal for daily use as well.
- 5. Know your competition - who is your competition?**
  - Viewing a movie in a theater is considered an entertaining activity. To many people, so is eating at a restaurant with friends, dancing, attending a live theatrical production, attending or participating in a sporting event, reading a book, surfing the Internet, playing video games, etc. Look past the obvious to view your competition as your customer would.
- 6. Conduct a SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**
  - Record the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that your business is confronting. Do the same for each of your competitors. What is a weakness for your competitor may be your strength and a marketing opportunity for you: Your employees have over 50 years combined experience, while your competition has 20; your business is centrally located, while your competition is hard to locate. Conversely, you may not have a Web site or highway construction will shut access to your business down for months. This exercise should be conducted annually and will indicate areas of improvement and company “points of pride” to promote.

## **7. Company elements that help sell your business:**

### **Company name and logo:**

- Your name should easily communicate what you do, but adding a fun element, if appropriate, can attract interest and customers
- Alphabetical listings – “Aa” comes before “Ab” - Aardvark Rust Proofing will be listed in any directory before Abundant Rust Proofing

### **Effective business names:**

- Antiques Market of Williamston: clearly states what and where
- Balloons Galore: clearly states what and implies more
- Curious Book Shop: clearly states what and implies discovery
- Dick’s Appliances and Miles Plumbing: clearly states what
- Geeks to Go and The Geek Squad: plays off geeky aspect of computer services – fun
- Insty Prints: clearly states what and when
- Portable Feast and Friends: clearly states food and implies fun
- Trainingworks: clearly states what
- Zingerman’s Deli: clearly states what and implies fun with a quirky name

### **Non-effective business names:**

- ASAP Painting: ‘ASAP’ implies action, but means ‘when I get to it’. ‘As soon as possible’ states that there are obligations ahead of yours
- G2 Boutique: ‘boutique’ implies specialty retailer; ‘G2’ means nothing, but represents the owner’s names: Gina and Georgia
- Shred X: is a paper document shredding company, but could be an extreme weight loss system or extreme video game
- TLS: acronyms reveal nothing unless they spell a well known word. Who would know that TLS is Total Landscape Services?

### **Business Cards and Stationary:**

- Most business cards are white. Be creative and stand out from your competition. Use color or interesting or unusual images or graphics that apply to your business. My Sure-Fire Marketing business cards were bright red-orange and featured a shadow image of a lit wooden kitchen match (sure to fire!). Plus the image and text were printed vertically rather than horizontally. My business card stood out from the pack and attracted clients. White stationary is effective, but should include great graphics. These ideas cost more up front, but if they create business for you your return on investment is quick and worth the expense.

### Freebies!!!

- People appreciate receiving free things and ‘give aways’ are an effective way to introduce your company while leaving a permanent reminder. The following items are among thousands that you can have manufactured in bulk for a reasonable price. Look under “Advertising Specialties” in the Yellow Pages or on-line.
- Chip Clips Key Chains Mugs Pens Refrigerator Magnets
- All should feature your business name, logo, contact information, hours of operation. A pizza shop’s refrigerator magnet that looks like a carry out box is not hard to produce.

### 8. Resources and Support Materials:

- Libraries – Capital Area District Library
- Read, Read, Read, Read, Read! You never know where an idea is going to come from. Read magazines that you would not normally read. Get outside of your comfort zone. The idea for the Michigan Walk of Fame [www.michiganwalkoffame.com](http://www.michiganwalkoffame.com) came from less than 70 words describing the St. Louis (Missouri) Walk of Fame in an article in Mary Englebreit’s Home Companion; a female oriented decor/lifestyle magazine.

CADL Search Categories for Marketing Related Books (list is not inclusive)

Communication in Marketing	Pricing (psychological pricing factors)
Direct Marketing	Relationship Marketing
Export Marketing	Sales Promotion
Green Marketing	Selling
Industrial Marketing	Service Industries Marketing
Interactive Marketing	Social Marketing
Internet Marketing	Target Marketing
Market Segmentation	Women in marketing
New Products	Customer Satisfaction
Physical Distribution of Goods	Success in Business

### Recommendation: Guerilla Marketing Series of Books

**CADL: *Guerilla Marketing for Free*: 100 no-cost tactics to promote your business and energize your profits. Author: Jay Conrad Levenson, Publisher: Houghton Mifflin, 2003**

## **9. Guerilla Marketing Examples:**

- The Green's (woman's apparel) Liquidation Sale took place one January during the worst blizzard in years. To encourage sales and additional traffic, we provided each customer an additional 10% off their purchase if they would call one friend or relative and tell them about the sale. Customers did this using the store phone at the cash wrap while their purchase was being transacted. This works well for retail, but variations of this idea should also work for other businesses.
- The "Weather Crawl," the message that scrolls along the bottom edge of the television screen during the local weather on the Cable Weather Channel, is a very cost effective advertising method. The Weather Channel is the nation's fifth most watched cable television network.
- During 2005, GM offered their Employee Discount Incentives to everyone. Chrysler and Ford soon followed, as did practically every business in the U.S. This was not only one of GM's most lucrative marketing ventures, but it worked well for tens of thousands of businesses nation-wide.

## **10. CADL Reference Materials (the true list is massively extensive):**

- Encyclopedia of Associations
- Chase's Calendar of Events – March is 'National Craft Month' and September 19<sup>th</sup> is 'National Speak Like a Pirate Day'. Chase's Calendar of Events lists national, monthly, weekly, daily National designations: A perfect resource for special event and marketing planning.
- Chase's Sports Calendar of Events

## **11. Marketing Objectives to Live By:**

- Get Involved in Your Community – this means yourself, your staff, and your business
- You Are An Expert! Promote Your (of family member's) Business at Every Opportunity. Speak about your business when ever possible. If you do not 'sell' it, who will? This includes speaking to school, church, student, and local business groups.
- Befriend the media. Most Americans are afraid of media contact. The media though is looking for contacts and individuals that they can contact for stories or local comments on related state or national stories. Create a fact sheet about your company on creative letterhead and ensure that the local newspaper editor or television story editor receives it. Either drop it off or mail it with a follow up call. Let them know that you are accessible.
- Read, Read, Read, Read, Read! You never know where a great idea is going to come from.