



COMPANY GROWTH CONSULTANTS



5 Simple Ways To Improve Your Marketing And Boost Your Business Profits

Introduction:

Marketing is the cornerstone of successful business. Without marketing there are no customers, and therefore, no business. In my work I come across many small businesses. Usually, when the owners are asked about their own marketing efforts, the simple reply is they are too busy to devote time to it – and anyway, as they are so busy, they don't need to do any marketing anyway!

This attitude highlights the one simple truth that stifles any possible growth in a small business – the owner of the business **IS** the business.

What I mean by this is that if the proprietor is on holiday, off sick or even dies, the business immediately stops. No-one else is around to pick up the threads and carry on. Spouses that are left have no idea what work is currently being done, coming up to be done, or even overdue. No knowledge of problems lurking in the background, or of the financial position of the business. In fact, everything was being carried in the head of the proprietor who fully intended to make some notes when he was not so busy, and had promised himself he was going to write up last month's books and records next weekend.

Most people start their business because they are good at their job and want to work for themselves rather than feather the nest of their employer. Once they have their own business up and running, they find they have replaced their former 9 to 5 job with a 20 hour a day business producing far less income than they were used to.

Can you identify yourself with this picture?

If so, here are 5 steps you can take to regain control of your business, improve your marketing efforts and boost your profits.

Step 1: Start To Work On Your Business Instead Of In Your Business

What has this to do with marketing and boosting profits I hear you ask?

Immediately resolve to step outside your business. What I mean by this is for you to go out and employ a person, maybe two or even three, to do the jobs that you have been so wrapped up in that you have been chasing round in ever decreasing circles. Remember the song "Busy doing nothing, nothing the whole day long, spending lots of time finding things not to do". When did you last feel that you had achieved a really valuable, and profitable, days work?

Don't worry, you are not alone! Most small businesses are in this position. The original good idea that sparked the formation of your enterprise was a similar incentive to most other people starting their businesses. But the reality is that the person having the good idea is mostly not skilled at the vast collection of things that need doing to bring that idea to life. For example, the small business owner has to be salesman, telephone operator, bookkeeper, credit-controller, invoicing clerk, progress chaser, VAT specialist, copy writer, supplies buyer, contract expert as well as dealing with many other things they never even thought of when that idea struck and the business began.

What would you do if you now had a couple of employees doing the basic work of the business? I asked a small business owner this very question recently and the immediate response was Starve!!

5 Simple Ways To Improve Your Marketing And Boost Your Business Profits

When I asked what he meant by that I was told that he couldn't possibly afford to pay anyone's salary and still have enough money to buy food for him.

I could see the way this chap was thinking and he is not alone. He thought that he couldn't possibly pay anyone's salary from his profits and still make a living for himself. After all, his finances are tight enough already.

Once I explained that this mindset was only valid if he simply sat on his hands after employing his assistants and did nothing with the free hours he now found himself with. That was a revelation to him. The very idea of having time to step back a little, to reflect, plan and think about his business was a pleasant surprise.

Now, let me ask you a direct question.....What would you do with 30 to 40 hours a week that had suddenly become free time?

Would you consider using a little of that time to maybe grow your business? Do you think you could use the time to channel the passion you felt when you were just starting out into continually chasing customers as you did in the early days until you became too busy?

This is the most important step you can make for your business – **ever**.

I know the thought is scary. The very idea of trusting your baby to new assistants that don't have all your skills, energy and the same passion for your business.....is a difficult concept to grasp.

I will address how to overcome this psychological barrier in another report but in essence – it is simple. It is just a matter of advertising for the right staff.

Once you have made the decision to separate yourself from the day to day details of your business some magical things begin to happen.....

Step 2: Customer Focus

Is the emphasis of your advertising, website, brochures, email newsletters etc. all about you and your business/product?

Is your company name featured heavily at the top of your letterheads, website, email newsletters, advertisements etc.?

If it is, I can tell you this is the biggest turnoff for new customers ever invented. I know it sounds harsh but do you think prospective customers want to know about the years of development, the trials and tribulations you have conquered, the merger of two businesses in 2001 to create the current firm, your qualifications and experience?

No, they do not!!

This is a hard fact for small businesses to understand. They spend lots of time and unnecessary amounts of money making a smart brochure, stationery set, website etc. and wonder why the orders don't flood in when the image looks so polished and professional.

5 Simple Ways To Improve Your Marketing And Boost Your Business Profits

All your prospective customers are interested in is what they get out of what you offer. By this I mean if you are selling to the public, they want to know how your product will make them feel, how it will improve their lives, save them money etc. If you sell to other businesses, what do you think they are interested in? Well, what are you interested in? Will this product make you £50,000 in extra profits, save two employees off the payroll, increase productivity, etc..... The best test is to apply your own thoughts about buying to your selling literature. What would you would like to see if someone was selling it to you.

It is sometimes a shock for people to look at their whole company image and ethos and realize that they would be put off buying if they were a prospective customer being approached by a firm like that.

Can you start now to see the power in changing your approach from being self orientated to solely and exclusively customer orientated?

Ask a good friend if they would buy from your company after looking at your literature?

Step 3: Make Your Advertising Work For You

Sounds obvious but if you look around you, are other businesses making it work for them?

Let me illustrate this idea with an example. You want a new bathroom and are really excited at the prospect of how your new bathroom will enhance your life, impress your friends and family, and be a source of pleasure for many years to come. Where do you look first for a bathroom company? In the local paper, yellow pages, a card on an advertising board at the supermarket? If you see an advert just it just give the business name address and phone number and mentions the fact that they are plumbers that can also fit bathrooms? Does it inspire you to contact them? It's unlikely but if you are new to the area and have no-one to ask for a recommendation, what choice do you have?

Would you rather see something that matches the image you have in your head of your new bathroom? An advert that tells you how your new bathroom will be designed around you, how the colour and choice of fittings will enhance the overall appearance, how the lighting can make such a difference to the look and feel of the room at night, how the range of tiles offered are chosen to perfectly compliment the fittings?

Which business would you contact first? The advert that just gives basic details or one that gives enough hints for you to know that they really care about their customers, and that they put their customers at the very top of their business's priorities.

I know this is an extremely simple explanation but it does highlight the negative way 99% of businesses represent themselves in their own adverts.

Another example is to look in your local Yellow Pages for an Accountant. In the Leicester edition there are 11 pages of entries for Accountants. All but one of them have their company name in big letters and a list of bullet points of the services they offer such as Accounts Preparation, Self Assessment Returns, Tax Planning and Advice, Consultancy and Support. How do these Accountants think you are able to pick their firm out of all those adverts, select them as your new Accountant, and acquire a new customer?

5 Simple Ways To Improve Your Marketing And Boost Your Business Profits

The one that I mentioned which hasn't done that shall remain nameless, but I can guarantee you that their Yellow Page advert is well worth the money they have spent. After all, what is the point of paying for an advert that just lists things that an Accountant is expected to know and offer anyway?

To make your advertising work you have to abandon the accepted way of doing things. Do not fall into the "institutional" way of advertising like all those Accountants.

Aim to be the only one who actively writes the advert to appeal to potential customers, to match the things they are looking for that makes you unique and worthy of their business.

Out of 11 pages of Accountants, would you sigh and just pick one that is close to your address, or if you saw one that offered you a free report that showed 5 simple ways to improve your marketing and boost your business profits, that mentioned other reports informing you of all matters directly relevant to your business; and that gave you the impression that you will be the most important person in their practice; would you choose them? Or at least ring them and have a chat?

Think of these pointers relating to your own business and make sure that your advertising works for you.

Lastly, don't be put off by pushy salesmen trying to sell you advertising. I have had it myself from that wonderful tome, Yellow Pages, telling you that everyone advertises "institutionally" because it works. It is simply because they are looking for a quick commission and don't want to be delayed by irrelevant matters such as artwork or design if they can help it.

Step 4: Test Everything You Do

This means just what it says on the tin. Test everything you do to make sure it works, that it creates the desired response, that it can't be done in better ways, that it looks at its best etc.

Never roll out a series of adverts or sales letters without testing. Simple changes to headlines, colours, size, content etc. can have a marked effect on results. Take out small adverts in different places and see which produces better results. Use a system of codes to make tracking the responses easier. Continually tweak and fiddle with them until you find a small advert that produces a good stream of responses each time you put it in. Then you can be confident that a larger advert, which costs more money, will produce even better results. This is how advertising should operate. If your current adverts are not performing as well as you would like – change them or get rid of them. Each advert should make you more profit – else why would you bother?

The reason you test everything is so you can judge the results objectively. A successful advert is one that makes a profit each time you run it so you must keep an eye on responses from each advert with a code or similar method. If you find a profitable advert, run it more often and in more places. Keep checking its performance and use it more and more whilst it is profitable. Dump it as soon as its performance starts to drop off.

Step 5: Take Control Of Your Business

Remember.....it is your business and you decide how it is structured, how it operates, where it runs from, how it is to grow and how it should be serving you.

5 Simple Ways To Improve Your Marketing And Boost Your Business Profits

If you have taken notice of Step 1 above, you should have climbed out of the trenches of your business. You should have stopped being a foot soldier and be acting as a general, directing your troops as they tackle the world of business to make profits for you.

Now is the time to decide on your working hours, what you really want out of life and how much wealth you want to create for yourself.

Most business owners are scared of stepping back from their business but the moment they do, the potential for growth opens up in front of them.

Once you are remote from your business you can start to make decisions about the future. For a start, everyone in the business should become an expert at marketing. Your customer's experience of your business starts with the first contact or telephone call. Every member of staff must therefore be customer focused and looking to give that customer the very best experience possible.

Have you ever been to a shop at 5.20pm that is supposed to close at 5.30pm, thinking you have time to pop in before they shut, only to find someone stood at the door refusing to let you in as they are closing. You can see the way those staff are focused – inwards upon themselves. They want to be leaving at 5.30pm and on their way home. They don't care if their boss loses a sale, they just want to catch today's episode of Neighbours.

A successful business will have staff more than happy to welcome you with a smile at 5.20pm and stay with you until you are sorted – even if it means they get home late themselves.

Conclusion:

There are many ways to educate yourself and your staff in marketing and customer services but it is time and money well spent. Just telling your staff to say "Have a nice day" as each customer leaves loses its benefit if it is snarled through gritted teeth.

This report has just been a quick look at how marketing is the only way your business will grow, and a hint at some of the techniques and solutions needed to make growth happen. If you would like to know more.....please ring me on 0800 047 0731 today and make the first step.

I also have an article about selling your business if you are interested in that area. But don't think that is for the future. There are important steps you can take many years before you want/need to sell that will make the whole process easier and yes, even enjoyable, when the time comes.

Thank you for reading.

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