

By Willy Campbell

Make Time for Marketing

If you operate a home-based business, there are more demands on your time than time is available. But, there is one business activity you can't afford to defer if you want to stay in business – MARKETING.

For any small business, marketing is a more complex undertaking than just selling what you're already offering customers. Marketing is a set of activities that attracts customers to your product.

In a home-based business that's not going to be signs in front of your house and a parade of customers coming through your door every day. The challenge is to adapt sound marketing techniques to your business's unique circumstances and offerings. And that takes time.

Here are six marketing tips to aid your business success:

1. Convince yourself that marketing is worth the time. When you don't think a task will contribute to your bottom line, it's easy to go on to the next item on your to-do list. If marketing is outside your so-called comfort zone, examine why you feel that way.
2. Have a Marketing Plan. Invariably a good plan is at the heart of personal productivity. Examine your business goals and determine how marketing can help fulfill them. As a new business owner, you may need a crash course in marketing. If so, that becomes part of your plan.
3. Be open to new ideas. How are competing businesses getting noticed by customers? If they are using techniques or media you never considered, take time to study and learn about new approaches. Experiment with marketing ideas that are low cost and low risk.
4. Dedicate the time. By reserving the time, you are less likely to procrastinate. Once you are committed to marketing, block out time for it, just as you would any other important task. Whether the task is market research or cold-calling, know what you want to accomplish in that period of time and anticipate the distractions that are most likely to interfere.
5. Stay connected. Take time to be at meetings and other gatherings of your professional and community groups. Yes, this presence takes time away from other business activities, but it keeps you in front of prospective customers and creates opportunities for you to sell yourself and your business. A home-based business is especially likely to benefit from this exposure.
6. Celebrate your marketing successes. Notice when your marketing pays off. You'll discover that as effective marketing leads to better exposure and more sales, it becomes easier to justify the time you spend to promote your services.

“Work smarter, not harder” is an expression that applies to marketing as well as other facets of entrepreneurship. Make time for marketing, use that time wisely, and you’ll hone your competitive edge.

To learn more about marketing, contact the Sandhills Chapter of SCORE “Counselors to America’s Small Business”. In addition, plan to attend SCORE’s free seminar on Marketing on 7 June at Sandhills Community College presented in coordination with the college’s Small Business Center. You can find more information on this seminar at the web site noted below. SCORE is a nationwide nonprofit association of expert business counselors who provide free and confidential business counseling to small business owners. The Sandhills Chapter is very active in counseling, mentoring and presenting free business seminars. It is currently expanding these activities and is seeking motivated volunteers. You can reach the Chapter via the web at www.sandhillsscore.org or at 910-692-3926. In addition the SCORE office in the Chamber of Commerce building is open 10am – 12 every Tuesday.

Remember – send your business questions to me at www.contact@sandhillsscore.org and don’t forget to provide a way to contact you. I may not be able to answer all of them in this column but every one will receive a personal answer from one of our Sandhills SCORE counselors!