



Marketing for beginners

Or how to get your va va voom noticed!



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Without exception, great branding and marketing conveys the right image and messages to the right people, in the most memorable way.

A good example of this is Innocent Drinks; from their packaging, website, advertising or from telephoning them at 'Fruit Towers', you know in an instant:

- what they sell – pure fruit juice smoothies (for 'innocent', read 'pure');
- who they are – a fun company, that listens to its customers and handles the subject of additive-free food with a serious but comical approach; and
- how to contact them and why – by telephone, email or letter, in order to comment, suggest ideas for recipes or simply to 'join in'.

I often see people reading the labels of these products and laughing out loud – and even if the reason for this is that

I move in some very sad circles, there is no denying the fact that Innocent is one of today's greatest marketing successes. Does your branding and marketing do the same for your business? If not, here's how it can...

1 Understand your offering

Your USP: What exactly is your service? You and your team should know absolutely everything about what you are selling, including the features, benefits, prices and rebate facilities. Most of all, you should know your own unique selling proposition (USP). What is it about you and your service that no-one else has? When I train my clients in sales, one of the most crucial aspects of my course is to ensure that every delegate knows this information about their company, because otherwise, it is impossible for them to sell effectively.

Your 'elevator pitch': Once you have

identified your USP, you can work on your elevator pitch; that is, how you would describe your business in 20 seconds to the CEO of a large client corporation with whom you happen to be sharing an elevator.

To give you an example, mine is 'I fix recruitment businesses. I help business owners to improve operations, increase profits and achieve their goals, through bespoke consultancy, interim management and training services'.

What's your elevator pitch?

2 Write your marketing strategy

Overall marketing goals: Decide what your goals are and write them down. What do you want to achieve in the next year? For example:

- To be recognised by current and potential clients, candidates and the general business community, as being an incredibly effective, knowledgeable and professional recruitment consultancy, that cares as much about its customers as it does for its own staff and suppliers.

Marketing objectives: Next, work out how you can achieve your overall goals. This could include:

- To establish a strong corporate identity, through a website and branding on all customer-facing

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"WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR SERVICE?
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documentation and contact, and through 'branded' activities.

- To build the client database through a programme of direct and indirect contact, using telemarketing, face-to-face meetings, email, newsletters, press releases and inclusion in all appropriate published listings.

Marketing messages: Without question, whatever your style, your messages should be clear, jargon-free and easily understood by lay people and professionals alike. It is not clever to use jargon that baffles everyone, because all this does is confuse and alienate the very people you are trying to attract. This applies, not only to

- Candidates with particular qualifications and/or experience.

Marketing activities: Only when you have the rest of your marketing strategy completed should you plan your activities. This will enable you to tailor them according to your goals, so that you achieve the results you are aiming for. Examples could include:

- Press releases and articles to appropriate publications.
- Website and branding on all client-facing and customer-facing internal documentation.
- Telemarketing to potential and existing clients to build awareness.
- Face-to-face meetings with potential



"IT'S NO GOOD SAYING THAT YOU ARE ONE THING, BUT THEN ACTING VERY DIFFERENTLY"



your written documentation, but to everything you and your staff do in your business – from how you answer the phone, to dealing with an irate client, handling a nervous candidate or dealing with major successes. For example, if you want to be seen as caring, professional and effective, this must come across in all circumstances, good or bad, because it's no good saying that you are one thing, but then acting very differently.

Examples of the messages you might want to convey are:

- Passionate about service.
- Expert in the financial recruitment sector.

This exercise will help you when you come to write your copy, for example, for your website, because you can ensure it has the right 'feel' by reflecting these messages.

Marketing audiences: It is important to know who you are targeting, so your marketing activities reach and appeal to them. Examples could include:

- HR and line manager decision-makers in SMEs, large corporations, finance institutions and accountancy practices within a 100-mile radius of your location.

and existing clients, to promote and sell and to develop strong working relationships.

- Branding of all operational activities, eg., method of answering the telephone, values-led recruitment services etc.
- Free advice and talks to appropriate student groups at local colleges.

3 Manage your marketing plan

When clients go through this exercise, they often tell me that they now have so much to do, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. My advice is to list everything, prioritise it and work through it 'one chunk at a time'.

Remember that each item 'heading' will have additional activities that go with it, so that they are, in effect, mini-projects.

For example, telemarketing and face-to-face meetings with clients are likely to necessitate the need for a sales process to be implemented, staff training to be organised and the design of branded forms and documents.

For effective email marketing, your client database will have to be bang up

to date and accurate, otherwise it will do more harm than good.

4 Tips

There are some highly effective, yet very simple methods you can use to enhance your marketing strategy. These include:

- Using testimonials – one of the strongest marketing tools. Many companies I know have significantly increased their sales, once they realised potential customers are more likely to listen to their peers than a sales pitch from you.
- Personalising all correspondence – 'Dear Candidate' or 'Dear Client' doesn't exactly create a feeling of a personal service!
- Asking for referrals – if your clients and candidates are happy with your service, they'll also be happy to refer others to you.
- Following up – if you say you'll call at a certain time, do it.
- Training your staff – ensure they are aware of how you 'brand' your activities.
- Keeping in regular touch – if your clients and candidates think you're not bothered about them, they're unlikely to bother about you.



CONCLUSION

Effective marketing does not have to be complicated, and you don't have to have a degree in marketing to do it well! It's not just a matter of clever imagery or a state of the art website. It's about communicating the right messages to your target audience and ensuring that everything you do in your business conveys these messages. If you keep that in mind, you won't go far wrong!

ABOUT DENISE WALKER, FREC

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- For further information, please visit www.absolutelybusiness.co.uk