

## **What you need to know about successfully marketing your business.**

One of my favorite subjects to research and discuss with entrepreneurs who want to grow their businesses is marketing. Marketing has been one of my passions going back to my sophomore days at Milligan College. I'm not really sure why I became so fascinated with marketing because frankly it wasn't such a hot topic in those days. It hardly got a mention even in my Economics 101 Class.

Since that era I have continued to read marketing books and once the Internet became available to the public on August 6, 1991, I later began researching what I could find to my heart's marketing content. Compared to 1991, the marketing "lessons" available online today could not be read in a lifetime. (I just Googled "Marketing Lessons" and got 75,900,000 results in 0.64 seconds.)

Let me begin with the first thing I always share with every one of my entrepreneurial "student/clients." "Everything in business is marketing...I mean everything!" From the condition of the parking lot in front of your business location; to the paint job on your building; to the condition of your front door latch; to the greeting a customer receives upon walking into the business; to whether the customer receives courteous, polite treatment; to whether the delivery was on time and correct. The top to the bottom line of doing business is the fact that everything we do is an element of marketing. And unfortunately, I can mention experiences that I have had or someone has shared with me to support all of the glitches I set out in the above sentence...and I didn't even mention our horrible experiences we sometimes have when contacting a business on their telephone system.

To further cement in your mind that "Everything is marketing!" allow me to mention when I bought the building in which my office is located today. I called my niece who is a graduate of the University of Tennessee, Architectural College with a degree in interior design. I shared with her that in my practice I tend to have more female clients regarding some of the legal matters I handle. I knew that some colors may appeal to females and make them feel more comfortable with their surroundings in my new office. Nor did I want to offend men either. My niece suggested two basic colors to paint the interior of my offices. It is interesting that I receive frequent comments complimenting what they think were my choices of colors.

I also decided to make my office more "comfortable" and not look like a professional's office. So I furnished it to look more like a living room in a home rather than a lawyer's more formal "everything is business" appearance. Most people coming to see an attorney for the first time are a little nervous and don't know what to expect. Therefore, I seek from a marketing aspect to have clients be more relaxed than stressed out. I even have a variety of magazines in my reception area for people to glance at for the short time they may need to wait. Those magazines have been selected so everyone who wants to pass the time reading should find something of interest to him or her in my reception area.

Since I "own" by law practice, I can hire my own legal assistant/secretary. What I focus on when hiring someone is the right personality. My legal assistant, Karen Lewis, fits that requirement perfectly. I receive compliments frequently from my clients who find her pleasant, attentive, friendly and cordial. Her focus is on helping our clients resolve their needs about which they have come to us. You can't teach personality. Each of us has had our own personality for a long time and it is tough to change. You can, however, instruct smart people who have the right personality. I have always coached my receptionist/legal assistants to first give new clients all

the attention they seem to need when they first visit our office. This is a part of the element of helping potential clients feel comfortable.

Each business has to develop its own marketing strategy. To begin that process the owner/manager must identify what type of business he or she is going to do. It isn't adequate to say: I'm a CPA; I'm going to work as a landscaper; I plan to practice law. When I opened the office I am currently in I had practiced law for several decades. I knew clearly what areas of the practice of law I had focused my attention.

It was interesting when I contacted the telephone company to speak with a sales rep about a phonebook ad. When the ad salesman came to my office he recommended that I list only three areas of my law practice in the ad. He went on to tell me why he thought that way. "I'm sure you have read some attorney's ads that list thirty different areas of the law they claim to handle. In my view there is no way an attorney can be and maintain an expertise in that many various facts of the law. Promote what you know and do best." I haven't changed that approach since he made the recommendation, but to add only that I am now a mediator.

Another marketing issue is to determine who your "target customers" are. If you fail to narrow down that issue you will spend a great deal of money and effort with marginal results. Say to yourself that "I cannot effectively be all things to all people." Obviously, avoid being too narrow in your definition because there may be other businesses providing the same services to the narrow block of customers.

When observing your competition attempt to learn as much about them as is possibly available. Note particularly in what ways the competition is failing to adequately serve all of the potential customer's needs. Ask yourself if you can fulfill those customers' needs?

Once you begin to market your business to customers, "tell your story." How you tell your brand story is critical to your success. Come to see me about any or all of the following:

1. Incorporating or forming some other operating entity for your business.
2. Selecting a name for your business.
3. Developing your brand message.
4. Selecting your business location.
5. Developing your "Tag line."
6. Determining your vision, values and standards and mission statement.
7. Creating an agreement between you and your partner(s).
8. Identifying who are your target customers.
9. Analyzing who and what your competition is and does.
10. What your unique value to your clients/customers is.

I can help you. I want to help you. Call for an appointment today or to simply find out how I can help you.

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