

Design your Marketing – making your business commercially attractive

How to use your customers to promote your business

Customers are extremely important to your business, where would it be without them? This may sound obvious, but there are some businesses that trundle along taking no notice of this vital element.

When analysing a business promotion, take notice of to whom they are talking to. Who is the main objective in their marketing message? Who is placed at the top of their advertising? Who are they describing when they talk about their services or products? Who is first, the company or the customer?

Humans are naturally self-centred; it's in our nature to look after 'number one'. But for business purposes this needs to be turned on its head: you need to think about who you are selling to, rather than banging on about how great you are. Customers don't give a tinker's toot about your business, they only care about what's in it for them. How are they going to benefit from your product or services? Will their lives be improved, and by how much? Will they get value for money?

This concept should be prevalent in all your visual marketing: website, promotional literature, advertising, shop front, merchandise, networking: pitch, presentation and social on-line, sales patter with your customers – in fact any visual outlet of your company. The customer always comes first, as it is they you are promoting to, and it is they who will ultimately buy.

Another factor to take notice of is time. Don't go mad trying to explain everything, especially if it's really dull stuff about your company. The 21st century is a fast moving world; customers won't (or even can't) spend time reading cluttered and over-long descriptions; they usually make split-second decisions and can be very cruel if it doesn't match their requirements.

For example, visitors to your website usually spend up to eight seconds to make up their mind whether it the right one, what they can do (go further in, click on something, sign up for a newsletter or download a free report) or just decide to disappear. Your leaflets have even less time to make an impression as to whether they are picked up or discarded: is this relevant to me, does it have the information I want, do I understand all of it, what's in it for me, who do I contact to find out more?

OK, customers are self-centred, but they are also greedy. You may have got an idea of this from the website reference above. If there is something they can get for nothing, they will have it. Take advantage, and offer an exchange of their details in return for something they want, is of value, is relevant and will benefit them. You now have their details in a secure database for future communication; they are now at your mercy to be promoted at! And customers like being kept in touch, especially if they will have first hand knowledge of any new promotions and can benefit from early-bird discounts!

Use your customers' opinions, comments and feedback. Write a questionnaire to find out more about their wants and needs. Encourage them to respond to your blog posts, tweets, social networking walls, on-line articles, events and workshops, teleseminars or whatever, and use this incredible source of information to find out how you can make your business even better for them. If customers feel they are appreciated, empathised with, understood and you are willing to adapt for their gain, then they will come back for more, tell their friends, spread the news and even provide testimonials and references ([I have a great referral postcard designed specifically for this](#)).

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