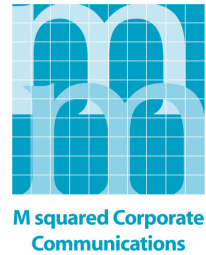


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Low Cost/No Cost Marketing – A New Year’s Resolution for Your Business

by Margaret Cain



When times are tough, you need to get your message ‘out there’ more than ever. Fortunately, there are some powerful marketing and image building tools and techniques which cost next to nothing or even nothing at all!

Here’s a checklist of key points I covered with Success Network members at the recent Caversham workshop...

Do you promote a professional image on the telephone?

- How do you answer calls – do you give your name and business?
- Do you have a separate business line?
- Is your voicemail message personalised to your business; do you change it regularly so clients know when you’ll be available? Do you return calls promptly?

Are you maximising the power of email?

Your day-to-day email can help to promote your business:

- Do you have a business email address with your own domain?
- How do you sign off your emails? Do you have a strapline describing your business and/or short, regularly changed testimonials from satisfied clients?
- Do you use email to update clients and attract new ones? If so, do you know how to get your emails past corporate spam filters?

Note: for more tips on using email as a marketing tool, see my articles on the Success Network website.

What do your prices say about you?

What you charge sends out a message about the value of your services:

- How do your prices compare with your competitors’?
- Aiming for the corporate market? They might not perceive the value if you price your services too low.

Have you remembered stationery and business cards?

These are traditional tools which we often overlook, yet they reinforce your image:

- Is your stationery professionally designed and printed?
- Could an unusual size or shape make your card more noticeable?
- Which card style is better for your business – double-sided with a marketing message on the back or single-sided so your contacts can jot down notes on the reverse?

Do you look good on the web?

Nowadays a website is a must; prospective customers typically go straight to the web to look for more information about you. However, 3-4 simple pages are sufficient for a start:

- Is your site simple to navigate?
- Do you show that you understand what keeps the client awake at night?
- Do you regularly refresh the content?
- Have you considered blogging and search engine optimisation to increase traffic?
- Is your copy easy to scan on screen with bullets and subheadings?
- Is your English correct? Poor spelling and grammar look slapdash.

A personal note: for years I apologised for my website, but Success Network member Anjali of Mantra Infotech has done me proud. Take a look at www.m2cc.co.uk

Are your clients working for you?

Word of mouth is a highly effective marketing tool:

- Who could your existing clients refer you to within or outside their organisation?
- Could you ask them to make the introduction, rather than just giving you a contact name?
- Could you capture the nice things clients say to use in your newsletters, emails, website...?
- Could you send them material of genuine interest for them to circulate to colleagues (but not jokes or urban myths, please)? This is known as 'word of mouse' or 'viral marketing'.

Do you nurture your clients?

- Do you invest time in maintaining regular contact with your clients?
- Do you send a professionally printed business Christmas card to catch up with clients who have become dormant during the year?
- Do you occasionally send press cuttings or links to news of relevance to their work?

Taking your story to the media

- Is your story newsworthy? Journalists resent being asked for free advertising.
- Is your press release correctly set out and tailored to catch the attention of your audience?
- Is your message clearly worded and structured so that busy journalists can easily grasp the key points?
- Do you distribute your releases to named journalists and follow up a few days later?
- Could you respond to articles and features in the press?

About the author

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