

OUT FRONT

7 Ways to Promote Your Business Without Breaking The Bank

SAM
SALES, ADVERTISING & MARKETING

by Andrew Lock

How to Get YOUR Business Out Front!

7 Ways to Promote Your Business, Without Breaking the Bank

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With so many products competing for our attention, why is that some of them manage to stand out from the crowd, whereas others die a slow painful death, and eventually slip into oblivion? What is it that puts a product out front? What's the secret?

Marketing.

There. I said it. I completely understand that might not have been the answer you were looking for. But it's a fact. **A poor product with great marketing will always outsell a great product with poor marketing.** That's the reality that you have to accept. I'm not suggesting for one moment that your product should be poor quality. Quite the contrary. ***A great product with great marketing is the ultimate winning formula.***

I can't help you create a great product, but I can help you with your marketing. I've spent years advising small business owners about how to get more people to buy their stuff. Simple marketing strategies, easily implemented, consistently. That's what will put you out front.

So, let's dive right in, as I hand you: **7 ways to promote your business, without breaking the bank...**

Marketing Method #1: Post Comments on Other Blogs that Relate to Your Industry.

This is a powerful strategy for getting potential customers to visit your website. Here's how it works. When you submit your comment on a blog, you'll be invited to include your website URL. When someone reads your comment, if they click on your name, it'll take them over to YOUR website. Pretty cool, huh?

As an example, suppose that you're in the business of selling collectible posters. First, search Google for the phrase "collectible posters blog" to find blogs in the same niche. You can also go to blog directories such as www.AllTop.com. Look for the most popular blogs in your niche because they have more visitors to draw from.

Next, add an intelligent, helpful comment in response to a post (a post is simply a short article or commentary), and remember of course to include your website URL. In the future, when other readers of the blog see your comment, if they resonate with it, they'll click through to YOUR website to see what you have to offer on the subject.

Although it might be tempting to write a short sentence in your comment, remember that your comment is an opportunity to PROVE that you can provide value. That's why it's important to write something intelligent that adds to the discussion. Your aim is for visitors to the blog to read your comment and think to themselves, "this person seems interesting, I'm gonna' check out their website to find out more."

Marketing Method #2: Submit a Weekly Press Release to www.PRLog.com

PRLog.com is a free submission service that'll broadcast your press release all over the Internet.

The most effective press releases are those that are either (a) controversial, (b) tie in with topical news, or (c) arouse curiosity. The most common pitfall with press releases is to write them like a sales letter. That type of press release will either be rejected or not get noticed. Instead, make sure it reads like a NEWS story you would read in a newspaper. Make it factual, and avoid hype.

There's a fine line between self-promotion and creating a sense of excitement, so you might need to get feedback from trusted friends. Of course, you always want to include your website URL and phone number in every press release.

What kind of topics can be covered in a press release? Well, a press release can be written for a significant number of events. For instance, if you've just launched a new website you could send out a press release explaining how the site is useful to your customers. If you launch a new service, a press release can be an easy way to encourage the curious to come and look. If you've added a new line to your existing offerings, a press release can alert your customers and potential clients to the good news. If you've won an industry award, a press release can help to instill a greater degree of trust in your company.

Format your release in easy to read, short paragraphs. Try to tell an interesting story, with specific details. Everyone loves stories! And don't forget to tailor the writing style to your audience. A press release written for lawyers should sound different to one that's for plumbers, obviously.

You'll learn a lot by reading press releases from other businesses, especially from press releases that obtain huge exposure. Examine what they did to create the buzz.

Your headline and opening paragraph should aim to grab the reader's attention quickly. Then, try and break down your message into the common questions like:

Who, Where, Why, What, When & How.

Before releasing your release, get it proofread by someone you trust. You'll be surprised at what they pick up on, regardless of how good your writing skills are!

Marketing Method #3: Propose a Joint Venture Partnership with other Companies in your Niche

It's easy to find suitable candidates to partner up with – simply do a Google search using keywords that relate to your industry, and then look at the ads on the right hand side of the page.

These paid ads prove that a company is willing to spend money promoting their product or service, so it'll be easy to persuade them to try a method of making money that doesn't require them to spend more money! Ideally call them on the phone with your proposal (suggest that they offer your product to their customers, in return for a substantial share of the profits).

Be friendly, and emphasize the merits of your product or service.

It may take you awhile to get through to the decision maker. Be patient and persistent, without being a pain.

Here's an example of how you might format a letter to a potential joint venture partner in a local market:

Dear X ,

I have a rather unusual proposition for you.

My name is {Your Name} and I'm a {your occupation} right here in {your city} since {date you opened}. During this time I've been lucky enough to serve {#} {customers/families}.

Recently I was thinking of a way to market my {business/practice} in a cost-effective manner. I realized I could do something that would be an excellent opportunity for you to gain enormous goodwill from your {clients/customers} while we both benefit.

I am in the position to let you give away a very valuable service from me which will greatly endear your clients to you - without costing you a dime.

Let me explain.

I would like to send a letter coming from you giving your clients a coupon for a free {product/consultation/service} with me. During this time I'll {explain benefits of free gift} This service normally costs {\$xxxx}.

It would be perceived as a great thank you gift from you!

And it will not cost you anything or take any of your time. In fact, I will pay 100% of the costs involved (postage and printing etc). Plus, I'll write the entire letter for you and you can have complete editorial control of it.

Please remember, this will in no way take away or be competitive with your services. I just figured it would make an excellent gift you can give away to your clients for their business and a way for me to get more people into my {business/practice}. There are no strings attached and your clients have no obligation to ever use my {product/services} again.

If this sounds like a good idea (and it really is), I'd be happy to give you a free {product/consultation/service} so you can see for yourself how great this {product/service} really is.

Please call me at {xxx-xxx-xxxx} and I'll explain everything in full detail.

Sincerely,

{Your Name}

Marketing Method #4: Post Classified Ads on the Many Online Classified Ad Websites.

A frequently overlooked method of getting traffic to your website is posting free classified ads online. Classified ad postings will attract people to your site AND provide you with many 'backlinks' from these websites to yours, which will help to raise the profile of your website on the natural search engine rankings.

This is an ideal task to outsource because it's repetitive (and boring) work that anyone can learn, but don't underestimate the value to your business.

So how does it work? Well, think of a classified ad in a newspaper. It's almost identical online, except there's another benefit in that you're generating hundreds of quality back links to your website when you put your URL in the ad.

Step 1: Register for your free account at each of the websites. It's useful to use the same login information for each one to make it easier to remember in the future, but it won't be possible for all sites so keep a record of all the sites and logins in an excel spreadsheet (or just use a notepad and pen but keep it in a safe place).

Step 2: Prepare the ad. It should be brief and to the point. It should have an irresistible offer, a compelling reason for the reader to respond, with clear instructions on what they should do next if they're interested. Try and make it sound as natural as possible – read other ads to get an idea of how other people write their ads. Save the ad to a text file (wordpad or notepad) so you can easily copy and paste it multiple times as you visit the various sites.

Step 3: Login to the site and paste the copy from the text file when prompted to enter your ad. If you want to remember the logins for each site automatically, use RoboForm (see www.roboform.com), an inexpensive piece of software that manages all the logins. There are some details to be aware of when posting ads...

Firstly, on some sites such as Craigslist there are numerous geographic regions to choose from. In other words, you can't post one ad that covers the entire country, it doesn't work like that. You MUST select a region in order to place the ad, so always choose the areas with the largest population first – that way you can reach the maximum number of people. In the USA that would be New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, Boston, Washington DC etc.

Be aware that under normal circumstances you're not allowed to post ads in more than one geographic area. The way to overcome this is to use a different email address for each posting (register multiple free Gmail accounts). Also, vary the ad descriptions each time (change the order of the words or sentence structure).

Try to select an appropriate category when given the option. Sometimes ads will be removed if they're not seen as a good fit for the category they're in. Finally, post ads consistently. Schedule this task every week. Make your message brief, to the point, with a compelling reason for the prospect to respond. Ideally, offer something of value, such as a free report, audio CD, DVD etc.

Marketing Method #5: Start a Blog that Helps and Educates People rather than trying to Sell.

You can setup a free blog using services such as www.SquareSpace.com or www.Weebly.com. Alternatively, you can use a free web hosting service such as www.Doteasy.com, and install WordPress, a blogging platform which is also free.

The most important key to success with a blog is to provide value to readers, rather than trying to persuade them to buy. Offer value first, build a relationship with them so that they get to know, like, and trust you, and you'll soon find that people will naturally ask what they can buy from you.

Once your blog has at least 20 posts on it, submit the URL to popular blog directories to let them know you exist. These include:

<http://blogs.botw.org>

<http://www.blogcatalog.com>

<http://www.bloggeries.com>

<http://portal.eatonweb.com>

<http://www.ontoplist.com>

<http://www.blogged.com>

<http://www.globeofblogs.com>

This method of marketing takes time, but it's a solid approach to building a long-term business.

Marketing Method #6: Offer to help other influential business owners in your niche.

Not only will you develop valuable relationships with people who are already successful, but there's a hidden 'marketing' benefit that will occur. When you help someone else, you trigger a psychological rule called 'reciprocity'. In essence, this means that when you do something good for someone, they cannot help but want to do something for you in return. It works every time. You'll feel good about helping them, and they'll feel great about helping you in return.

How, specifically can you help others? Well, what skills do you have that could be of benefit to others? If you're an expert at WordPress, you could suggest some helpful plugins that would enhance the person's blog. If you're an expert writer, you could offer to write some articles to help promote their business. Use your imagination and get creative. Everyone has skills and abilities that are useful, don't take that for granted!

I know a number of people who have used this free marketing method effectively. As a result of them offering assistance to others they've become good friends with very influential business owners who

have reciprocated far beyond the value of the initial help given. Again, your only commitment is time, a willingness to use your skills to help someone who might help you in the future.

Marketing Method #7: Create a Facebook Profile, LinkedIn Profile, and Twitter Account.

These are the best social networking sites for business owners to have a presence on. Simply listing your website URL within your profile for each of these sites will give you high quality back links to your site. In addition, add your photo, a description about what your business does for others, and some personal information that makes you seem more human and likeable!

Also, you should use these networks to network! They're great tools for making useful, profitable connections.

Never try and directly sell through these channels because you'll be viewed like the MLM "guest" at a party who becomes a pest because they won't stop pitching their product! Be human, engage and interact with others who share similar interests, and always aim to provide value to others FIRST. Do that, and they'll most likely want to reciprocate without you even asking.

Be careful with Twitter, it can suck your time like a vampire. Use it sparingly and to provide value to others, for example to share web tools and resources that you think others might find helpful or useful. Never pitch. The more value you provide others, the more they'll want to listen to you, and help you in return.

As you can see, it's easier than you think to get out front, in any industry. Follow the blueprint laid out in this guide, and I'll see you out front!

For more help with your marketing, watch: The SAM Show at www.SAMsuccess.com - it's a free WebTV show for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

See you on the show!

Andrew & Chris