

Effective Promotions for Customers and Prospects

For long term success, every business or organization must attract and retain customers. Most of us understanding the term *marketing* as the discipline associated with such activities. On the web site KnowThis.com, Dr. Paul Christ offers this definition of marketing:

Marketing consists of the strategies and tactics used to identify, create and maintain satisfying relationships with customers that result in value for both the customer and the marketer.

Marketing encompasses a broad range of activities, from product development and pricing to promotion and distribution. As your printer, we have a role to play in helping you effectively promote your business or organization's products and services.

What is promotion?

Promotion is the way your business or organization communicates with its intended audience to achieve its corporate goals. Although the exact methods used for promotion differ widely depending on the organization's budget and scope of reach, all businesses and organizations engage in some form of promotion.

For most small businesses and local organizations, the primary audience for promotions is a target market group (current, past and potential customers) and those who may act as an influence on that group (such as news media, special interest groups, and opinion leaders).

Of the four major promotional methods – advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal promotion – the two most often used by small businesses and local organizations are advertising and public relations.



Advertising

Advertising is a way to attract people's interest in your product or service. In general, advertising reminds customers and prospects about the benefits of your product or service; establishes and maintains an image; encourages existing customers to buy; and attracts new customers. Advertising has a cumulative effect over time and for that reason doesn't produce instant results. Rather, advertising is a background for other promotional activities.

An important advertising tool is *direct mail*. Many kinds of mailers, from post cards to letters, brochures, flyers and catalogs, can be sent to a specifically targeted audience whose characteristics indicate they are very likely to be interested in your company's product or service.

Direct mail advertising has several benefits when compared to media advertising (newspaper, magazine, radio, or television):

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- **Targeted.** Direct mail advertising can be targeted to a specific audience such as current and prior customers or prospective customers whose demographic profile matches that of existing customers. This allows the message and the design of the advertisement to be structured for maximum appeal to the audience. Furthermore, new technologies such as variable data printing permit precise, one-to-one marketing.
- **Measurable.** A distinct benefit of direct mail over media advertising is that responses can be directly attributed to the mail piece. This allows for measuring the cost-per-acquisition of new customers and the consequent return on investment of the advertising expenses.
- **Affordable.** For small businesses and local organizations with a limited advertising budget, direct mail is affordable. An effective direct mail advertising campaign can be tailored to almost any budget.

Tips for effective direct mail advertising

The effectiveness of direct mail advertising, as measured in response rate, increases with each subsequent mailing. Therefore the number one way to be effective is to be persistent. If you've selected your mailing list carefully, you will reach some people who are in the market for what you sell and want to buy now. You'll also reach some people who have no interest and immediately discard the mail piece.

However, the majority of recipients – perhaps as many as two-thirds – might be interested in buying in the future, but aren't motivated to respond now. A direct mail advertising campaign keeps your name and message in front of these people for months or even years – provided you mail regularly and consistently.

For best results, we recommend that you mail every month. What should you mail? We can think of two things: a post card directing customers and prospects to your web site where they can find product and service information, alternating with useful information such as a tip based on your expertise in your industry.

Let us help you compile a mailing list and design a series of 12 post cards. By designing and printing everything you need for a year's campaign you'll enjoy some pricing benefits and be ready to mail on time every month. And since we also offer mailing services, we can schedule and implement each month's mailing for you on a predetermined schedule.

Public relations

Sometimes referred to as *publicity*, this kind of promotion uses third-party sources such as the news media to get your organization's name in front of the public. Although publicity is not targeted to an audience like advertising, it has some major benefits: it is free, and it has a perceived value much higher than paid advertising. Public relations capitalizes on influence of a third party – the media – which is viewed by many as being an independent, unbiased source of information. Accordingly, a story about your company's new product or service that appears in the business section of the local newspaper may carry more weight than a full page, paid advertisement.

Like advertising, public relations can be used to build awareness, create interest, and stimulate demand. It can also provide customers or prospects with more comprehensive information that can usually be included in an advertisement.

The primary tool for public relations is the *press release*. However, a newsletter can also serve as a form of public relations to a limited audience – your customers and prospects. A newsletter keeps your customers and prospects informed of product releases and special sales; it reminds them of existing products or services; it establishes your company's credibility by announcing awards or honors earned by the company or its employees; and it provides meaningful, relevant information from the experts in the company.

Newsletters can be produced in versions that target different audiences – current customers, former customers, prospects or even vendors. Effective newsletters are well-received by interested audiences and may even be saved as reference material.

One barrier to publishing a newsletter is the amount of time it takes to write the copy. This can be overcome by designing the newsletter so it doesn't require more than 500 or 600 words per issue – the amount of space on one side of an 8 1/2 x 11 inch sheet of paper. We can help you design a newsletter that can be printed on a post card or has an appealing shape such as an 8 1/2 x 14 inch sheet of paper folded in half.



1205 Alderwood Avenue
 Sunnyvale, CA 94089
 (408) 400-0223 Fax: (408) 400-0267
www.expressprintingusa.com
 email: info@expressprintingusa.com