

## TWELVE MARKETING TOOLS MOST SMALL BUSINESSES DON'T GET RIGHT

### [PART 1 OF 2]

No matter how successful you are in your business, you can always improve your marketing strategy.

Randy Spina is a leading small business marketing expert and author of the book “Affordable Marketing Solutions: Proven Techniques to Profitably Market Your Small Business” ([www.myaffordablemarketing.com](http://www.myaffordablemarketing.com)). Here are some highlights from a long conversation we had recently about the 12 marketing tools most small businesses use, but seldom get right.

Business Cards. RANDYE: This is the most frequently used of all small business marketing tools. First, print on the back on the card. You get 100% more space for just 25% more print cost. Also, use the same font and colors as much as possible on all your marketing materials. This will give you a consistent business identity and help with brand recognition.

CLIFF: “Bullets” describing the goods or services you provide, or five key marketing messages you want your customers to remember, make excellent content for the back of the card.

Display Advertising. RANDYE: Frequency is everything. Too many times I hear clients complain that “my ad didn’t bring in one new customer.” Well, one ad won’t do anything. A small ad run six times at two-month intervals is far more effective than a large ad run once or twice.

Print publications are losing readership, and even those readers are “skimming” rather than reading, but if you’re targeting older people then print will still work. Online

display ads are less expensive, but there's tons of competition, so be sure they are graphically eye-catching. Try using dotted lines like a coupon to get more attention.

Direct Mail. RANDYE: I live on the sixth floor of a high-rise condo, yet I can't tell you how many direct mail pieces I get for swimming pools, gutter cleaning and other goods and services that I can never use. When buying address lists from commercial brokers you should make sure they are sorted to include only the most likely prospects for your specific business.

CLIFF: Also, watch your timing. Soon after I had my house power-washed last year, I got a blizzard of post cards from power-wash companies. Too late! The time to advertise for snow removal services is in September or October, not January.

Trade Shows. RANDYE: Trade shows are all about eye appeal. Use professionally designed booth materials and do proper pre-show marketing so your market will know you're there. You should also have some means of collecting attendees' business cards so you can send them a follow-up promotion within two weeks. For example, give someone a free iPod® if you pick their business card from a goldfish bowl.

CLIFF: You should try to spend as little time at your booth as possible. Get a couple of extremely attractive young people to manage your booth, hand out giveaway items, and answer basic customer questions (just be sure they can track you down fast on your mobile phone if a journalist or other important person shows up at your booth). You should be walking the floor yourself, looking for potential new business partners and customers, sizing up competitors, schmoozing with industry "players," and learning

about some of the new developments that may make your business obsolete. That's what trade shows are all about

The less your "booth people" know about your business, the less likely they will give away sensitive information to someone who seems to be a highly motivated customer but is really a competitor in disguise.

Stenciling Your Car or Truck. RANDYE: You would be amazed how many people hire plumbers and other contractors after seeing the stenciling on their trucks in the neighborhood. Remember that the stenciling needs to be large enough to see, and graphically interesting so it creates a visual impression. Your company name and telephone number should also be easy to remember: people with both hands on the steering wheel will not be able to write them down for later reference.

CLIFF: You should stencil the hood, trunk and both sides of your vehicle. The hood stenciling should be "reverse image" so people ahead of you can read your message in their rear-view mirrors.

Brochures. RANDYE: It's best if you create these as "self-mailers" – with space for the recipient's address and postage so you don't have to use a separate envelope. Professionals, especially, should have a brochure describing their services, credentials, testimonials from clients and others, and fee schedule.

CLIFF: Brochures are expensive to write, design and print so you will need to spent lots of time getting the details right. Also, proofread them carefully: once you print thousands of brochures, it's embarrassing (and credibility killing) to correct typographical errors and make changes by hand.

Many of the benefits of a marketing brochure can be achieved by a killer small business website. They are much cheaper to create, and you can update them in “real time” to correct mistakes, make changes and give your customers new and timely information.

More about those next week.

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