

TWELVE MARKETING TOOLS MOST SMALL BUSINESSES DON'T GET RIGHT

[PART 2 OF 2]

Here are more highlights from my conversation with Randye Spina, small business marketing expert and author of the book “Affordable Marketing Solutions: Proven Techniques to Profitably Market Your Small Business” (www.myaffordablemarketing.com):

Signage. RANDYE: A while ago I saw a very expensive four-color standalone sign for a Mexican restaurant at a bus stop. The sign said how great their burritos were and posted a phone number, but there was no location mentioned. Now, if you're hungry and you drive by the sign, or you're on the bus, are you going to call them and order a burrito? No! You want to know where the wonderful burritos are!

Your Website. RANDYE: Success in Internet advertising depends entirely on how the search engines see you. You want your Web copy to be easily readable by humans, of course, but if you want to be found online you have to write for the search engines. A good search engine optimization (SEO) professional will charge around \$500-\$750 for strategy and specific recommendations on how to do that.

Also, you should look at your website statistics now and again to see where visitors are coming from, how they're searching for you, and how many page views are translating into actual sales (what Web professionals refer to as your “analytics”).

Three excellent (and free) resources I use frequently are:

- Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics);
- <http://getlisted.org> (which tells you if your website is showing up on the top search engines, not just Google); and

- www.whois.sc (which “scores” your website’s visibility –if your score is below 90 you’re likely not using the correct key words/phrases for the search engines to pick up).

Social Media Postings. RANDYE: The jury is out on how effective social media advertising is for small businesses, but if you’re going to do it, then DO it. Update your postings every day. Set aside 10 minutes first thing in the morning or before you go to bed at night.

You don’t have to use all the available social media platforms. Choose venues that are appropriate for your business. For example, an accountant has no business wasting time with Instagram® or Pinterest®; he or she should be on LinkedIn®. Just the opposite, however, would be true for an interior designer or hair salon whose work needs to be seen visually.

Once you have established a social media presence for your business, you need to link your website to your postings and tell people to “follow you” (on Twitter®) or “like you” (on Facebook®).

Finally, you need to reach out to your clients to tell them you’re on social media and make it easy for them to find you. If you have a retail outlet, put up a sign by the cash register, or have front line employees talk about it during the checkout process.

CLIFF: One of the dirtiest secrets of Internet marketing is that most people learn about new Websites from offline sources such as newspaper articles and recommendations from fellow humans.

E-Mail Newsletters. RANDYE: Don't try to do this yourself. Use an e-mail marketing service, such as ConstantContact®, that looks professional and guarantees that your newsletters comply with federal and state anti-spam laws.

If you do use your own e-mail account to send “blanket” e-mail messages, make sure that:

- you use ONLY the “bcc” function when you send your newsletter, so that individual recipients do not see other recipients' e-mail addresses; and
- you include opt-out instructions at the bottom of each transmission (with a link that works!).

Web Video. Video on your website should be on the home page. Why? Because Google® indexes home pages with video higher in its search engine rankings than it does sites that have no video, or where the video is buried on an interior page. A home page with video has a 54% higher chance of landing on “page one” of customer searches.

CLIFF: A link to a YouTube® page is great, but won't have the same clout with search engines.

Live Appearances. CLIFF: When people are looking for contractors or professional help, they don't buy your services. They buy you. Getting yourself in front of prospective customers and letting them know you are easy to deal with and affordable can be a great way to build brand recognition and “buzz” in your community.

But your personal appearances won't generate results if your audience comes away thinking they are glorified sales pitches. I personally find that talking as little about

myself and my law practice works wonders when I give a talk to a local business group. I focus on the information my audience came to hear.

RANDYE: Remember to make your talks both entertaining and informative: you can't teach anyone anything if you can't keep them awake. Be sure to give your audience lots of takeaway handouts with your contact information on them. And always – always – close your talk by offering a free consultation or other benefit to your attendees.

Cliff Ennico (cennico@legalcareer.com) is a syndicated columnist, author and host of the PBS television series 'Money Hunt'. This column is no substitute for legal, tax or financial advice, which can be furnished only by a qualified professional licensed in your state. To find out more about Cliff Ennico and other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit our Web page at www.creators.com. COPYRIGHT 2014 CLIFFORD R. ENNICO. DISTRIBUTED BY CREATORS SYNDICATE, INC.