

Chapter 7

Marketing on a Shoestring

■■■ **Not only can you make MORE MONEY, but you can even SAVE MONEY – sometimes hundreds or thousands of dollars – when you make cost-effective marketing a priority.** While many of these strategies will involve your time, they will involve little or no money.

- The Power of Staying in Touch
- Set The Stage For Success with Case Histories and Testimonials
- Better Marketing Materials Mean More Profits
- Let Your Voice Mail Sell for You!
- The Best Websites TELL as Much As They SELL
- Email Marketing – Without Worrying about the Delete Key
- Create A Great Email Signature Line
- Use Catalogs To BOOST Marketing Ideas
- Promotions: Marketing 24/7
- Add Profits When You Track Your Customers
- Promote The Promotion

Make More Money – The Power of Staying In Touch

The FIRST name that comes to mind

Keeping in touch with clients on a regular basis, by checking in at least once a month, is a habit that has helped me make more money. **Because of this habit, I maintain ‘top of the mind awareness’ with my customer base, which plays a critical role in my overall business success.** (The name of my company will pop into their minds first, and not that of my competitors.)

I make it a habit to visit and call my customers as often as possible. **Nothing beats personal contact for increasing sales.** In today’s digital age, it’s tempting not to call on clients personally, but it’s not smart business.

Recently, during a personal visit, I learned about a new marketing campaign at my customer's company - a campaign with a very large budget. Had I not made the personal sales call, I probably would have missed out on this very lucrative opportunity.

Gentle reminders

When I'm planning to attend industry trade shows I contact my customers ahead of time to find out what kind of samples they'd like me to bring back. Many times just hearing from me will remind my customers that they need to place an order.

Keeping track of changes

Regular phone calls **help me learn about my customers' needs and stay on top of changes** that may have taken place. Today change occurs at the speed of light, so my calls also keep me connected with the right promotional products contact in the organization (even if the faces change.) Since I always make it a habit to get to know everyone in the office, staff is always happy to introduce me to a new employee who may have replaced my regular contact. (Plus, today's administrative assistant could be tomorrow's promotional products buyer!)

'Know, like and trust'

Your customers are people, first, and appreciate your interest in them. *Remember the adage, people buy from those they know, like and trust.* Keeping in touch on a consistent basis, helps you build the **'know, like and trust factor'**.

Recently, a customer told me her daughter was looking for a job in an organization where I had a contact. Because I had a connection, I was able to get her daughter an interview. You never know when and how you can help someone. I do this without expecting anything in return, but I am a believer that if you try and help others, they will do the same for you.

INSIDER Information

The Call-Mail-Call System

I use the **call-mail-call system** to keep my name in front of my best customers and prospects and recommend this system to all the promotional products professionals I coach. **First I call, then I mail, email or fax information to them and finally I**

follow up with another phone call. Using Microsoft Outlook® as my contact management system, as soon as I get a new prospect, I add his or her name to my database.

Here's an added quick tip from **networking expert and author of *Non-Stop Networking*, Andrea R. Nierenberg.** She recommends noting how your clients **prefer to be contacted** and putting that symbol in your database (P-Phone, F-Fax, E-Email, S-Snail Mail.)

► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

- Use a **contact management system such as ACT!™ or Microsoft Outlook®** to keep in touch with your prospects on a regular basis.
- **Record** what your prospects and customers say so you can track their responses.
- Send customers a **monthly newsletter** that introduces new products AND shows how to use them to get better marketing results.
- Ask your prospects and customers **how they prefer to be contacted** – by phone, fax or email?

Make More Money – Set the Stage for Success With Case Histories and Testimonials

Build credibility and trust quickly

Prospects need a reason to buy from you – and case histories and testimonials are an easy way to build credibility and trust quickly – even if you’re just starting out. Include testimonials from satisfied clients and case histories of successful promotions on your website and throughout your marketing materials. It’s a chance to show off your creativity and problem solving skills and show how successful you are in helping customers who face the same business challenges. Use them to help you stand out from the crowd!

Right from the start

Even if you are new to the promotional products business you can use case histories to sell. Check out the suggestions below that can help you build credibility right from the start.

Quick Tip

The fastest and easiest way to get testimonials is to ask a pleased client if you can quote them.

INSIDER Information

Case histories at your fingertips

Most suppliers have case histories of successful promotions on their websites or in their literature and welcome the opportunity to share them with you. Pick five suppliers and choose promotions they feature to showcase the benefits your company provides.

Resources to guide you

The **Promotional Products Association International (PPAI)** features case histories of award-winning promotions on their website: www.ppa.org. The **Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI)** at www.asicentral.com provides a promotions calendar you can use to generate ideas. Visit my website: www.PromoBizCoach.com to see how testimonials help me build credibility within my target market.

► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

- Visit your **suppliers' websites** to find case histories of promotions that will appeal to your customer base. Feature promotions that address your customers' Hot Buttons in your marketing materials.
- **Call your customers after an order** has shipped to make sure everything went as planned. If they are pleased (as I am sure they will be), ask if you may quote them. Send them an email of what they said and ask permission to use it in your promotional materials.

Make More Money – Better Marketing Materials Mean More Profits

What's an overlooked sales tool?

Business cards are one of the most important aspects of marketing your business and a great sales tool that is too frequently overlooked. Your business card introduces you and your business to prospects and referrals and is a great opportunity to leave a LASTING IMPRESSION!

Make a great FIRST impression

Use these Six Tips to make sure your **BUSINESS CARD** makes a great first impression:

- Use a **heavy card stock** to convey quality
- Consider working with a graphic designer to give your card a **professional and unique look**
- Create a card that's **memorable**
- Make it easy for **customers to find the different ways to contact you**
- Use a **font that's easy to read and leave enough white space** to avoid a cluttered look
- Provide a **call to action on your business card**: 'call us for a free catalog' or 'call for a complimentary marketing consultation'

Quick Tip

Take advantage of the back of your business card to add more marketing punch!

MAKE MORE MONEY – Let Your Voice Mail Sell For You!

A message that sets you apart

Most people don't think about **voice mail as a marketing tool** or that it can actually impact your bottom line. Most of the messages today sound the same, *I'm either on the other line or away from my desk*, and are easily forgotten.

Invest just a minute

Why not give your voice mail message a front row seat in your sales department? Here are some things your message can do for you – and they'll only take a minute of your time!

- **Change your message frequently** to keep it fresh and interesting.
- **Does your message clearly state your name, company name and the services you provide?** Don't forget the basics!
- **Always maintain a professional tone and message.** Stay upbeat.
- **Let your customers know other ways they can reach you.** Make them aware of your website address, cell phone and fax numbers. This will keep frustrations at a minimum when they absolutely, positively have to reach you.
- Use your voice mail to let callers know about any **special offers, discounts or promotions**.
- Voice mail is also a great place to **remind customers of holidays and special occasions**. Each one gives them another opportunity to use promotional products to stay connected with THEIR customers.
- **Ask the caller to leave his or her telephone number even if you think you have it**, since you may be out of the office when you return the call.
- Ask the caller to **leave the best time to return their call**. This saves time and aggravation for both of you.

Quick Tip

Get into the habit of reviewing your message and any options you have programmed into your phone on a regular basis. Glitches like bad voice quality and wrong information can slip in without your notice. Do your own quality control and avoid losing callers or important messages by mistake.

► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

Have friends and family listen to your phone message and get some quick and easy feedback!

MAKE MORE MONEY – The Best Websites TELL as Much as They SELL

Making the web work for YOU

These days everyone has a website. The problem is, after a while, they all start to look alike. What can help you stand out? Most importantly, what will **drive customers to your site**, rather than to the competition?

Make it easy to do business

Make it **easy** for customers to do business with you at your site. Have a website that loads quickly, is easy to navigate and answers your customers' questions clearly. Make the purchase process uncomplicated and speedy. Too many clicks, confusing choices or information overload and you've lost another customer.

Go up against the competition – and win!

Personalize your site with your company profile and specialty. Even if you purchase a turnkey website, look for creative ways to make it stand out. Add a picture of yourself or your staff. Use graphics to create interest and help visitors find what they're looking for. Feature success stories and helpful tips that show customers how to get better results from their marketing.

Tie your site to your marketing materials

Make sure your website identifies your brand – include your logo and keep colors consistent with those you use on your business card, letterhead, brochure and other marketing materials. Most importantly, give your prospects reasons to work with you!

INSIDER Information

Connected, current and clicking

Promotional products sales professional **Barbara Hooks of *Hooked On Promos*** (www.hookedonpromos.com) created a website that is unique and has an easy search feature. She regularly updates her site with new products and useful creative tips for her buyers. Together with her email newsletter, her site works to keep her buyers connected, updated and clicking through to make purchases.

Best \$ite in the business

As a result, Barbara's customers are always telling her she has one of the best sites in the business and -- it goes without saying -- **she consistently outsells many of her competitors.**

Quick Tip

Survey your customers to see what they value in a website and then act on it.

MAKE MORE MONEY – Email Marketing Without Worrying about the Delete Key

Lots of bang for almost no buck

Email marketing is an easy and cost-effective way to make more money, but in order to make it work for you, you need know the ropes. In today's click and delete world, you need to send an email that will not only get noticed, but adheres to proper email etiquette AND the laws against spamming.

Make sure it really works

Give your email announcements and newsletters the power to be noticed and opened by using these **EASY TIPS**:

- Create a **SUBJECT LINE** that gets noticed
- Put a **BENEFIT** in the signature line. Example:
 BORING: **Special Offer**
 I WANT TO KNOW MORE: **Want more qualified leads at your next trade show?**
- Use the **BODY of the email** to feature a clever promotion and share tips on how to implement it
- Give your email **more MARKETING muscle**. Don't just send a picture of the latest promotional product – let readers know how it can help them increase the impact of their marketing message.

Permission-based marketing

Today, any email you send needs to be **permission-based**. That means before you send an email to a prospect or customer, you need to get their permission.

How to ask for permission (and when)

A **newsletter sign-up box** on your website is the best way to ask for and receive permission. Also, every time you call on a prospect or customer ask if you can sign them up for free special offers and tips by email.

Quick Tip

Track the responses you get from your email marketing. Use this information to learn what attracts customers. Then repeat the wording and specials in email announcements that get the best results.

MAKE MORE MONEY – Create A Great Email Signature Line

Free advertising

A signature line sits at the bottom of your outgoing email messages and identifies you and your business and includes contact information and a promotional message.

Every time you send an email your signature works like free advertising. So don't overlook this opportunity to highlight benefits and invite your choice clients to contact you.

Use an email signature line that gives your clients a reason to contact you in all your email correspondence. Signature lines are easy to set up in Outlook[®] and Outlook Express[®], as well as other email programs.

Email signature example

Here is an example of an engaging email signature line from promotional products professional Judy Peacock of JHT Associates.

"If you can think of it - I can find it!"

Judith S. Peacock
President/CEO JHT Associates, Inc.
245 Central Street
Hingham, MA 02043
judy@jhtassociates.com

► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

- **Create your own email signature line.** Make sure it contains a benefits statement and includes a link to your website or email address.
- Look for tips on how to **create a signature line** in Outlook® or Outlook Express® by using the HELP feature.

MAKE MORE MONEY – Use Catalogs to BOOST Marketing Ideas

Catalogs as idea generators

Just handing out catalogs to anyone, anywhere and at anytime is not an effective use of this marketing money maker – but using **a catalog as a marketing tool to help generate ideas for your customers, WILL make you money.** (Let your prospects know that this is just a small sampling of what you can do.)

Mini-catalogs

Many suppliers are currently printing **mini-catalogs** and will give you a small quantity free or for a nominal charge. I like to **use mini-catalogs from suppliers that offer a variety of products.**

Referral sources

Ask the stores you patronize if you can leave a few of your catalogs on their counter, such as your dry cleaners or hair salon. I leave catalogs at my local print shop. Since I don't do printing and he doesn't do promotions, we can be **referral sources for each other.** Think about all the places you patronize – **who would be a good referral source for you?**

► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

- Check with your top suppliers to see if they offer a **mini-catalog** option.
- Think of three locations where you can **leave your catalogs.**
- **Think reciprocity:** hand out a non-competitors business card in exchange for handing out yours.

MAKE MORE MONEY – Promotions: 24/7 Marketing

Beat your competitors AND the marketing competition

When you call on a client, you are not just competing with other promotional products companies, you are in competition with all the other options they have for spending their advertising dollars. There are many ways your prospects and clients can promote their businesses: TV, radio, billboards, newspapers, fliers and direct mail, just to name a few.

Staying power

With so many options available today, you need to convince clients of the **extra marketing punch that promotional products pack!** As a professional, you can show your prospects and clients the value of promotional products by emphasizing their **staying power** (a calendar advertises 365 days a year), **cost-effectiveness and residual value** in attracting and retaining business.

You can also show your prospects and clients how they can make their current non-promotional product advertising more powerful by **teaming it up with a promotional product.**

INSIDER Information

Powerful marketing partners: ads & incentives

A large national weight loss chain combines its newspaper advertising with a promotional product incentive, which they offer to customers who sign up for their program during a traditionally slow month. The results of the newspaper ad, coupled with the promotional incentive, include a 20% increase in new customers!

MAKE MORE MONEY – Add Profits When You Track Your Customers

YOUR last ten clients

Where did your last TEN SALES come from? Knowing where your clients come from is a powerful marketing tool. It's how you can track what's working for you - and what isn't. Keeping track will save you lots of time and money. It makes no sense to spend a great deal of money on expensive Yellow Page ads and direct mailings, if the majority of your business is coming from referrals.

Create a simple tracking system

Create a system for tracking your customers. Use it to find out where a majority of your sales come from: referrals, advertising or networking? Keeping a **notebook next to your phone** can help you easily record this information. After you've gathered enough information, **keep doing what's working and eliminate what isn't.**

I've made it a habit to **track all of my phone calls.** As a result, I've learned that most of my business comes from referrals - this allows me to plan my marketing *and* thank the people who are giving me the most business.

► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

With all of these great marketing ideas you need to **create a system for keeping track of what's working.** It makes no sense to spend time or money on marketing materials that don't get the job done.

MAKE MORE MONEY – Promote the Promotion

Self-Promote – it's easy (and fun!)

Set a great (marketing) example and make more money – with self-promotions. Never miss a chance to spotlight what you do best with a creative promotional gift featuring your logo, for your prospects and clients. It's the perfect opportunity to highlight your creativity, show your customers that you believe in what you do and give them a great idea for promoting their own businesses.

Contact your favorite suppliers to see what opportunities there are for self-promotion. Many suppliers will do free or very low cost self-promotions for you if you do a high volume of business with them.

INSIDER Information

Add a little sparkle

I love **Post-it® notes** and enclose a 25-sheet pad with my logo on it with all my invoices. (I add a handwritten note on the top sheet: *Thank you for this wonderful order!*) As a result, I've sold hundreds of thousands of Post-it® pads over the years – it's a simple way to add *a little sparkle* to a routine mailing.

Holiday buzz

The holidays are a popular time to show off the power of promotions and give gifts that create a buzz. Last year, my gift to my customers, not only showcased my company and got people talking, but also spotlighted an innovative product I knew they would find useful.

Make promotions work overtime for you

The pen I mailed to all my customers had a comfortable rubber grip, my logo imprinted on it and a stylus point on the end. The stylus point is designed to be used with PDA's - it was such **a popular self-promotion that it repeated many times and made me much more money than it cost.** *Now that's self-promotion that really works overtime for you!*