



## Marketing



### **Creative Marketing - 10 Low Cost, No Cost Marketing Ideas**

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Starting a new business? Need to revitalize your current marketing activities? Have little or no funds to do it? Well, there are some potentially effective low cost or no cost ways to get your company name known without putting a huge dent in your budget:

**1) Small Business Opening** - Contact your local newspaper. Some offer a free, one-time listing of your new business in hopes of obtaining future business from you. Space is typically limited, but you can usually provide a brief description of your products and services, location and contact information.

**2) Write a Press Release** - Write a release introducing your new business or a new product. Submit it to your local and community papers. Newspapers are always looking for new stories and articles and you just never know if it'll be printed, but it's worth a try.

Don't know how to write one? Start with a product/service announcement. Include customer testimonials, if you can, on the benefits of utilizing your company. Or quotes on why what you are announcing is important to the marketplace. Include a company overview with location, products/services, credentials and contact information. Make it upbeat and exciting, and inline with your company image. The whole press release shouldn't be more than one page long and should include your company logo. Email the press release to the attention of the Editor of each publication you are targeting.

**3) Write Articles in Your Area of Expertise** - Again, local/community newspapers and magazines are looking for new material so try your hand at writing about your area of expertise. If you don't know where to start, then how about "10 ways to..."? This will get your name out and give you added credibility. For magazines, try to narrow in on those that your target audience would read.

An email to the Editor is a quick and efficient way to get going. Introduce yourself, your objective and include a sample article. Include a business overview and personal biography to demonstrate your credentials.

**4) Your Business Card** - Use the back of your business card. It's your mini-brochure for when you network and wasted space otherwise. Print what services and benefits your business offers and what you do. It may cost slightly more to print on the back, but it is still a very inexpensive form of advertising.

**5) Your Elevator Speech** - What is your business infomercial? A short elevator speech is a brief description of what you do and for whom you do it. It describes how you offer value,

benefit and quality to your customer. Make sure to state a couple of benefits in using your product or service and give examples of the types of customers you are looking for.

**6) Networking** - Now that you have your promotional business cards and elevator speech, you have some tools to go out and network. People do business with people. So whether it's an informal or formal networking group, get to know people, find out what they do, let them know what you do. It will increase your exposure and credibility. With formal networking groups (professional, trade or business associations) understand the current mix of business participants and look for strategic alliances with other non-competing companies that service your same target market.

**7) Free Web Directories** - There are many free online directories where you can list your business. Check out city, provincial and government websites - many have free business directories. Some have limited space on your business description so make sure you have a crisp, well thought out description of what benefits your company provides. These directories are also great sources for new prospects as well, if you are in the business to business market.

**8) Build Referrals** - You'll never know unless you ask. When communicating with your prospects and clients, ask them directly if they know anyone else whom your products or services could help. Also leave them extra business cards and brochures when you visit so they can easily pass on your information. And send it electronically as well, since email is easily forwarded and can have a multiplying effect.

**9) Give a Lecture** - Many organizations and associations need speakers for breakfast, luncheon or dinner meetings, conferences or conventions. Let your network group know that you are willing to do lectures and they can watch for opportunities for you. You can also contact associations directly and offer your services for free. Advise them on the lectures that you have prepared that would be of particular interest to their membership. The objective of the presentation is not to make money, but to obtain new contacts and to increase your credibility and exposure.

Make sure that you distribute your company brochures, newsletters or any other appropriate material at the lecture. Also, develop a lecture evaluation form with questions that will provide participant contact information and an evaluation of your presentation. Ask participants to sign up for your newsletter. This will help you improve your presentation and obtain additional information on the participants.

**10) Family and Friends** - Train your family and friends to be your sales team. They don't have to go out and sell, but if they are talking to someone that says "I need...", it could be you. So make sure your friends and family members understand what your business does and train them to identify opportunities to refer business your way. Also, as with your referrals, arm them with your business cards, company brochures and send the information via email as well. Provide them with the tools to easily help you.

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