

**FOCAL
POINT**

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5 Inexpensive Ways to Market Your Small Business



Focal Point Coaching

You don't need a large budget to market your business effectively. In fact, some of the best marketing methods are not expensive. Here are five ways to market your small business without spending a lot of money.

Personal Recommendations or Word-of-Mouth

Personal recommendations or word-of-mouth is one of the most effective ways of marketing your business and it doesn't cost you a cent. If you can create a buzz and cause people to start talking about your business, you will receive a lot of free publicity.

This kind of publicity is usually more effective than paying for advertising because people trust those they know. Therefore, the people who hear about your business through personal recommendations are likely to receive a more favorable impression of it than if they see an advertisement.

According to the market research company, Nielsen, 92 percent of people trust personal recommendations more than advertisements.

People are much more likely to talk about your products, services, or business when they stand out from the crowd. If you sell a product or service that is different from its competitors in some way, people will be inclined to tell their friends about it. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to invent something entirely new. You could take an existing product or service and put a new twist on it. For example, you could give it an unusual color or flavoring, distinctive packaging, or a human-interest story.

Some ways to encourage personal recommendations include:

- Giving your customers discount vouchers that they can pass onto friends and family members.
- Asking customers to provide testimonials that you can publish on your website.
- Encouraging customers to write positive online reviews of your business.
- Giving customers a reward for referring one or more new customers.



Talk to the Media

An article in a local or national magazine or newspaper can give your business a lot of free publicity. Start by talking to your local newspaper or magazine about your business. Give journalists an interesting angle that they could develop into a feature for their publications. For example, your products may include unusual or exotic ingredients, or the inspiration to start your business may have occurred in an unexpected way.

Other ways of publicizing your business in the media include:

- An interview on your local radio station.
- A post about your business on an influential blog that deals with your products or industry.
- Sending out a press release about a newsworthy event, such as a significant new product launch.

Stay in Touch With Customers

Remind your customers that your business offers great products or services. Collect their physical addresses and send them a postcard with a time-limited offer. Gather their email addresses and send them an email inviting them to a VIP customer evening with a discount on everything. Start an e-newsletter filled with interesting stories, news about your business, products, and how your customers are using your product or services, and don't forget to reward your customers for their time by offering discount vouchers.

If you send these communications very often, they will lose their impact. If, however, you send a personalized email or card once every few months, your customers will feel valued and be more inclined to visit your business and recommend it to others.

Online Marketing

Even if you have a bricks-and-mortar business, you can't afford to ignore online marketing. If you don't have an online presence,



your business will be invisible to a large number of potential customers who search online for businesses such as yours.

Start your online marketing campaign by setting up a website and registering it with Google My Business, so that online searchers can find it. You can set up a website either for free or inexpensively by using templates offered by such websites as Moonfruit, and Yola. No technical knowledge is necessary.

You can do it yourself but should you? If you can't afford a professionally designed website where a marketer is in charge of creating a "website that sells," then fine. But remember you, your kid, or your brother-in-law – unless you are professional marketers – won't be able to deliver the same results as a professional.

The money you spend on a professional website will return many times over its original tiny cost in increased sales. Why? Because online shoppers research options online before they buy. Your website is probably the first thing a prospect will check, so your website better makes you the obvious choice. How well your website achieves that goal can easily spell either success or failure for your business.

Start a Facebook page to promote your business and link it to your website. After that, send out tweets on Twitter to let people know about offers or promotions. Setting up a business blog is another good way of marketing your business for free. Offer useful information and ideas to capture your readers' interest.

You can do it yourself, but should you?

Attend Local Events

Attending local events helps to raise awareness of your business in your community. You could, for example:

- Participate in a charity event
- Attend business networking meetings organized by your local Chamber of Commerce or another organization
- Rent a booth at a local fair or market.

Marketing your business doesn't have to be expensive, not marketing it effectively can. Start marketing your business using a few of these low-cost marketing methods. Measure the results of each method to find out which ones are the most effective for your business.