

Promoting Your Business on a shoestring Budget

5 simple solutions for
getting the word out about
your business. }

According to federal estimates, 8 million jobs have been lost in this recession nationwide, prompting many individuals to start their own home-based business. Compared to the expensive start-up costs of a traditional business, a home-based business is the perfect alternative. You avoid outlays for office space, utilities, and office equipment. Thousands of people across the country are finding that working from home provides them with the advantages of earning an income, with the flexibility to work when it is best for them.

With increased competition among budding entrepreneurs, letting consumers know about your business has never been more important. Too often, individuals spend all of their creative energy developing a unique business, only to fall short when it comes time to build brand awareness. Add to that a lean workforce and the hectic workload associated with starting a new business, and it is imperative that small-business owners have affordable and easily implemented promotional strategies. These five free or low-cost promotional tips are a great start to help build one's business and achieve success.

1. Brand

A recognizable and compelling logo will not only attract the eye and curiosity of a consumer, but also help separate your business from the crowd. Professional logos can be expensive when designed by a large agency, but local freelance graphic designers or online design competition sites can be a great, low-cost alternative.

2. Socialize

It's not just a fad; social media is here to stay! With more consumers turning to online networks for guidance on such things as purchasing decisions, small businesses must utilize networks like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other social media channels in order to build customer awareness and loyalty.

3. Refer

Nothing builds a business better than the recommendation of happy customers. With an attractive referral program, satisfied customers will be even more willing to share your information with their friends and colleagues. Offering customer incentives or partnering with the local chamber of commerce can be a great start.

4. Promote

Coverage of your company in the media can be a great way to grow instant brand recognition. Find ways to connect with the appropriate reporter at your local newspaper-whether via friends of friends, Twitter, or other avenues-and consider various online press-release services as a cost-effective means of spreading good news.

5. Profile

Company profiles are a great way to build brand awareness and attract potential customers. There are a variety of websites and blogs that profile small businesses on the rise. A listing or mention on these sites will give you additional exposure 24/7, bringing more traffic your way. ■

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