

PR AGENCY CEO PRESENTS MARKETING STRATEGY TIPS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

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Establishing your marketing strategy is about answering some basic questions. You'll need to know who your ideal customer is and how your product fills a need that is unmet. Since it's necessary to learn about your customer in this way, you'll need to retain information on what interests them and how those interests tie into your product or service.

YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

You know what you have to offer, now you need to determine your target audience. Their interests mean a great deal to you. If you're selling gardening tools, your target audience will be homeowners. Other topics and interests they have will be important to you also. By using the prior example, you could include people interested in DIY projects, floral arranging, or those who want to eat fresh produce. This gives you a framework for your product and expands the overall view of your target audience.

Discovering the full scope of those interested will take some time as you ask probing questions of yourself and others associated. That does not mean you cannot start moving forward. Keep asking the who, what, where, how, and when questions as you advance with building your marketing strategy.

THE NEEDS OF YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Here are some specifics on how to convey the relevancy of your product. Describe your product in detail, taking time to list all of the qualities about it that are unique or an improvement on similar items being sold. In any market, you must emphasize those specific differences. If your product quality is better and you can sell it for half the price, then be able to show in a tangible way how that occurs. One good way to show this is with client testimonials. Consider using a test group for your product who can report their experience, but be prepared to make changes to further enhance your product if flaws are reported.



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Here's how to determine if your product or service meets the demands of your market. You will need to be brutally honest with yourself in this phase. The product you develop is your baby and you're already invested in the concept. You will need to take a step back from that viewpoint and start finding out how your target customer will view the product.

Once you have verified the value of it and what vacant spot it fills, you will begin to best present it in ways that make it accepted publicly. Evaluating these ideas is about making your marketing strategy more appealing to your audience. You should already know what areas of interest your audience has and where you can give them value in a marketing approach.

BRINGING VALUE

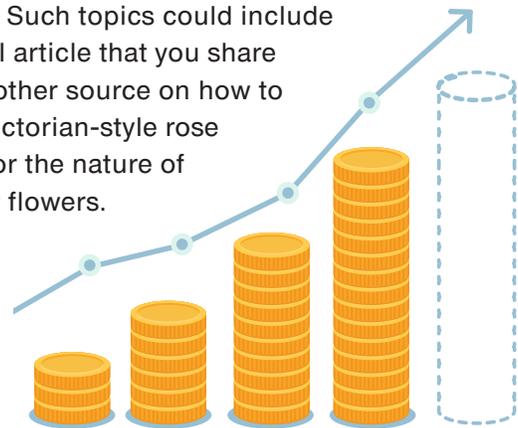
Avoid the immediate sales approach when marketing your offering. It needs to be acknowledged with trust and relevancy first. Your content marketing strategy should offer value to your customers as a fundamental approach. We can start this process with the five topics below that will appeal to our hypothetical target group.

1. Growing guides, seasons, and time frames for a variety of plants or vegetables.
2. Patio designs and furnishings.
3. Outdoor DIY projects such as sprinkler systems or water runoff systems.
4. Outdoor lighting designs and options.

5. Information about your product, including selling information, how-to videos and other uses for your product.

Once you have five generic topics, then you can set up a schedule to post about each of these topics on a rotating basis. However, the schedule is not about posting the same type of information on the same day and time each week. Keep your sales and product-related posts updated at varied times. Don't let your customers notice that you are posting updates every Monday morning and Wednesday evening, and don't make all of your products posts about selling. It's not necessary to draw attention in this manner.

Posting varied topics gives additional value to your customer. This creates a positive flow of information from you to the customer, helping them to feel at home with your company and secure with your product. You won't be overwhelmed with the information covered. However, you might plan for one or two open spots each week where you can insert additional topics that apply but are more specific. Such topics could include a special article that you share from another source on how to plan a Victorian-style rose garden or the nature of different flowers.



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PRESENTING YOUR INFORMATION

Your presentations can be in a wide array of formats and delivery systems. Some that you might consider include:

- How-to videos
- Email newsletters
- Email ads – short-form or long-form
- Blog posts
- Facebook business page posts
- Instagram account
- Twitter feed
- Vine or Vimeo
- White paper reports
- Sites that are specific to the type of products you offer

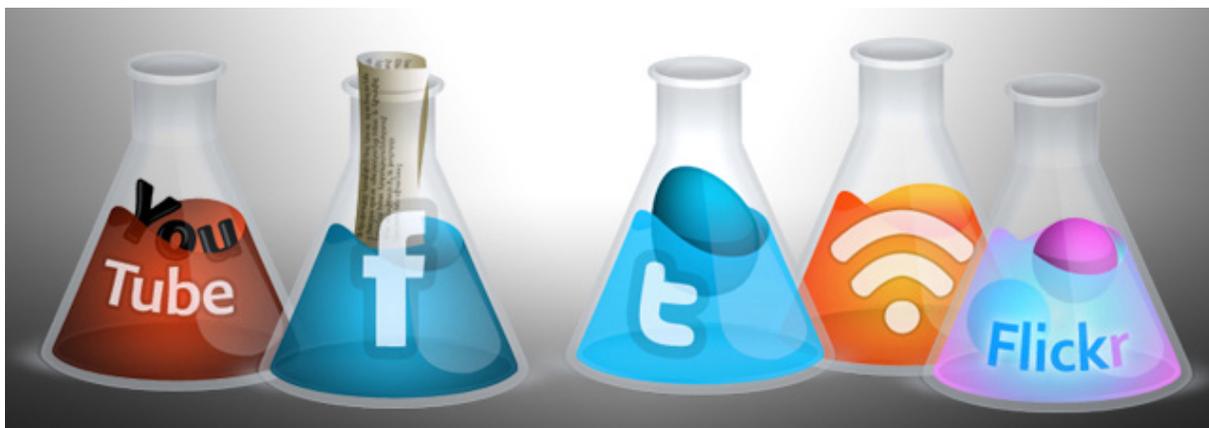
Decide where your products are going to thrive and where you'll find the best responses from your audience. Do they respond better to quick messages on Twitter, to humorous anecdotes, or heartwarming and inspiring stories? Of course, you'll use them all to some extent, but over time you'll find the most effective approach for you to use and when to use it to your best advantage.

OUTSOURCING

Understand that you want to outsource: making sure your product is catching attention in all of the right ways. One way you can outsource is to share articles from other experts in the field. You don't have to be the only source of information.

You can also outsource by letting others take on the responsibility of writing or filming some of what will be posted. Instead of just having a dry FAQ page on your website, have members of your staff videotape their responses to questions. This gives your customers a chance to know your staff and feel like they're a part of the family.

As your company grows, there'll come a time to consider getting help from a public relations firm to get your product exposed to a wider range of audience. A PR firm can also help you with bringing all of your advertising and content strategies to the next level.



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THE GREAT PRODUCT METHOD

Your product is amazing and can do something not yet done. On top of that, you've made it affordable, and now you just need to make sure people know about it. Don't be shy about sharing that information, but make sure you also provide value in the process.

SEEING ENGAGEMENT AND NOT AWARENESS

True engagement can mean a great deal for your bottom-line. Expect up to 40 percent more spending from consumers who are already engaged with your brand prior to selling. This only expresses the importance of ensuring that your audience and clientele have an actual interest in you before requesting them to do anything.

Though this special report is about engagement, oftentimes we find prolific companies that are not proactively attempting to develop engagement with the groups they reach. So, this section is more of an acknowledgement that, above building awareness of who you or what your products are, you want to have people seeking you.

People will only seek your company out if they believe in you as a company - the short time span of traditional advertising will not allow this to be done as effectively because of the expanded role the Internet plays.

We've organized the following to show you how easy it is to stray from seeking engagement and instead attempt other solutions not yet suitable for the relationship you may have established between the consumer and your brand.

The Consumer Learns about You. ...

When the consumer is first introduced to your brand, you want to nurture the view they have because first impressions last. You'll have plenty of time to build this relationship once they're engaged. A mere 15 years ago, a company could get away with having a cool logo to display to first-time consumers, but things have changed.

Today, once a potential buyer learns about you, engagement becomes your next best step before attempting to justify the product or service you have available. Hold back and build the relationship first. If you have taken the time to build the relationship, go to the next step of asking questions and getting to know what's interesting to them in order to show that you have heard and respect their views, their interest in you and your company: your product will grow naturally.

If you have piqued their interest, they will go searching for more information about you. Make sure your online footprint is consistent through all of your social media platforms and website or blog.

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WHAT YOU DO WHEN THE CONSUMER LEARNS OF YOU

If you follow the old rules of marketing, you would be doing these actions:

- Tell them about your product
- Show them specs to build a desire for what that product offers
- By using either guilt, greed or vanity, you build their emotional desire for this product
- Show them the intangible benefits: "People will like you"
- Tell them about how you're better than your competitors
- Give them a price point and tell them to buy now

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO INSTEAD

Instead, you want to engage with them. Allow them to first express themselves so that they innately know where your services or products fall into their lives. This will be obvious when products are designed to meet the needs and demands of real people.

The dynamic expressed in these two approaches have an obvious diversity that needs to be considered. Today's consumers are more empowered and knowledgeable through the use of electronics and the Internet. The availability of information in the form of articles, reviews and forums give consumers the power to be very choosy and highly selective.

All it takes is one bad word about your brand - they won't even try to reevaluate what you're offering. Since these newly bred spenders have this empowerment, it means offering them something that can't be done with a straight forward approach.

Brands have to stand out from their competitors' products and services.

Branding is not about discussing products and services or even providing them. It is about displaying the identity of an organization while at the same time building trust in the company and its offered products. Treat the time, energy, and interests of your customers with respect and they will notice the difference. Only after they know and trust you can you, in turn, secure real engagement and loyalty.

That is the real value of a good content marketing strategy. It helps you formulate the plan to engage, build trust, and develop relationships valued by your target audience.

True engagement can mean a great deal of positive response for your bottom-line. Expect up to 40 percent more spending from consumers who are already engaged with your brand prior to selling. This only expresses the importance of ensuring that your audience and clientele have an actual interest in you before requesting them to do anything.

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