

Low-Cost Options for Marketing

By Kevin W. Brown, M.B.A.

Q. Budgets are tight with many firms. What are some low-cost options for marketing?

A. There are a lot more than you might think. I'll give you a few but keep in mind that some of these apply more to certain types of businesses more than others.

1. Take care of your clients! Meet with each of your major clients on an individual basis, at no charge. Gain an understanding of their business issues for the coming year.

2. Add value to client relationships. Think of innovative ways to help your clients, such as introductions to a prospective client for their business.

3. Use e-communication. Top-of-mind marketing helps your clients and prospects to think of your business regularly. Consider a consistent program of social media and e-newsletters to build engagement.

4. Use your existing marketing materials effectively. Are you using what you have the right way? A lot of businesses don't. For example, you may have a website but is it generating quality prospects for you? Are you using it to build client relations?

5. Build and maintain relationships with business contacts. These relationships can be critical in keeping business coming in the door. It is important to communicate with these key individuals on a frequent basis.

6. Create face-to-face programs that build name recognition and create selling opportunities. For example, offer a seminar or workshop hosted at your facility. Your clients get to come and see where you work, it is easy to host and inexpensive. Cater a nice continental breakfast or lunch. These events can be invaluable for image building and developing relationships through face-to-face interaction.

8. Train your personnel in effective client service and sales. Lots of opportunities can go out the door – or not return – because your employees don't treat clients right. This is an area that is often overlooked but is extremely vital to your company's long-term health.

4. Help your clients to reduce costs – even the cost of your services! This may be a real shocker for your clients— but they will greatly appreciate it and it can help in client retention.

9. Give back to the community. Do what you can to help out the local community. People will realize what you are doing and will appreciate your efforts. Select a cause that matches with your corporate values and that has relatively high exposure in your target market, so that when you sponsor it is known by your key contacts.

Overall, a key is to be consistent. Marketing programs should be consistent, year-round efforts because "stop-and-go" marketing always bring mixed results. It is crucial to have consistent implementation, since this will maximize your efficiency and effectiveness. It is also easier to rate the productiveness of an activity if it is carried through to completion.

About the author: Kevin W. Brown, M.B.A. is the founder of The Specialists in CPA Marketing™. He has decades of experience working with CPA firms of all sizes (from solos to the Big 4) across the country. Prior to forming his own firm in 1991, Kevin was the Director of Marketing for Deloitte, Orange County's largest professional services firm with over 400 employees.

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