

Get Business Now: Play by the Marketing Rules

By Charlie Cook

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Charlie Cook
ccook@charliecook.net

Get More Clients <http://www.charliecook.net>

Marketing a business is like any game. If you know the rules you are much more likely to win. All too often small businesses spend their limited time and money on advertising, networking, making calls, mailings, meeting with prospects, yet only achieve middling results. The problem isn't that they don't know their business or provide high quality products and services, it's that they don't know the rules of the marketing game.

Marketing To Win

To win the marketing game, you need to know the rules. The key rules to getting the clients you want are:

1. Market Solutions
2. Target Your Market
3. Demonstrate Value
4. Build Your Network
5. Stay in Touch

1. Market Solutions

Most service professionals focus their marketing on their expertise, their approach and the products and services they offer. While competence is a key to doing the work, most clients' primary concern is getting problems solved and having their spoken and unspoken needs met. Instead of marketing your credentials, your processes and methodology, market your knowledge and the solutions you offer.

Marketing is about making connections, specifically between a client's unmet need and the solutions you provide. The best way to impress clients is to show them you understand the problems they are experiencing. If you want to leverage your credentials, mention past clients when you provide examples of how you solved similar problems.

2. Target Your Market

Are you getting a positive response to your marketing efforts? If not, then you may not have targeted your market and their specific needs and interests precisely enough. Independent professionals or small business owners often try to do the impossible and be everything to everybody. Instead define your niche market and get the attention of this group.

3. Demonstrate Value

Actions speak louder than words. If you want clients to be aware of the value of your products or services, you will need to give them a test drive. Open the door with newsletters, workshops, a free session or articles found on your web site. Over time demonstrating the value you provide will convince prospective clients of your ability to solve their problems and help position you as a trusted advisor.

4. Build Your Network

The objective is to know who is interested in your products and services. Networking is a good idea because people like to buy products from people they know and trust. If they've met you or been referred to you they are more likely to trust you.

Depending on the business you are in, you can build your network of prospects through conventional networking or through your web site and email. Either way the more qualified prospects you have in your network the better.

5. Stay in Touch

Memories are short. Once we hit middle age most of us can't remember what we had for dinner two days ago, much less the host of services various firms provide. In most cases its safe to assume your target market has forgotten about the range of solutions you offer, if they remember you at all.

Stay in touch with your target market on a monthly or, at a minimum quarterly basis. When you contact people be clear about the action you want prospective, existing and past clients to take.

Win the Marketing Game

Once you know the rules to marketing you can apply them to map out your marketing strategy, and to select marketing tactics that will leave your competition in the dust.

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The author, Marketing Coach, Charlie Cook, helps independent professionals and small business owners who want to improve their marketing and attract more clients.

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