

Is Your Marketing Full of Holes?

By Charlie Cook

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Charlie Cook
ccook@charliecook.net

In Mind Marketing <http://www.charliecook.net>

You wouldn't try to collect water in a bucket that leaked or catch fish with a torn net, but that is what many service professionals and small businesses do. They work hard to attract clients and customers but too often their marketing is full of holes.

The biggest holes in small businesses' marketing efforts are in lead generation. For those that don't know it already, identifying, attracting and building a steady stream of prospects is the number one marketing task for growing a service business. You need to know who is interested in your products and services in order to market to them, again and again.

Every small business has some sort of lead generation strategy, whether its just handing out business cards, sending out press releases, writing articles, asking for referrals or, in more recent years, putting up a web site. The problem is that many of these approaches are used sporadically not systematically, and techniques aren't in place to capture the contacts made.

Interested prospects are missed, or if contact is made, are pushed away by your materials, web site or phone system. The result is that hundreds and thousands of potential prospects fall through cracks in your marketing and you can't profit from their business. If your lead generation strategy and systems aren't generating dozens or hundreds of new leads each week then your marketing strategy has a big gap in it. Four common holes in marketing are:

1. The Lack of Compelling Content

Whether it's the title of your web site and the description shown in the search engines, or the title of your article and the first paragraph, your content needs to pull in

prospects. Too often marketing materials are written from the sellers' point of view instead of the prospects'.

Compelling content captures prospects' attention by focusing on their problems. Without good copy prospects won't be moved to become clients.

- Is your marketing content compelling from prospects' perspective?

- Does it lead with information about prospects' problems and concerns?

2. Limited Reach

If you could contact all the people who need and want your services, you might want to. Using advertising, direct mail or cold calling to do this is in most cases cost prohibitive. PR, writing articles and having a web site are some low cost ways of getting attention. The objective with any of these is to reach as many people as possible in order to find qualified leads.

Despite effort put into creating marketing materials, building web sites and writing articles, independent professionals rarely get the visibility they want. Articles are only read by a handful of people and web sites are hard to find.

To leverage the time and money you put into your marketing materials, articles, and web sites, you need to do everything you can to help people find them. This sounds obvious, but most service professionals write an article and just post it on their web site or send it to a few clients. With hundreds of online ezines and offline publications looking for content, you could be putting an article in front of tens of thousands of people instead of just a few.

The same is true of search engine listings. Most people can't even find their own sites in the search engines. Help the search engines put your web site on the first page or two for your keywords and you'll increase your exposure and reach hundreds of new prospects each week. Depending on your business, this is easier than most people realize and will extend the reach of your marketing dramatically.

- How many people per week see the marketing copy or articles that are meant to get them to make contact?

- What are you doing to increase this number?

3. Missing Motivators

Grabbing prospects' attention is the first step in lead generation; moving them to make contact, visit your web site or call your company and add themselves to your target list is the next step. When you write an article or send out a mailing, provide an incentive for prospects to take action.

Offer a workshop or free report.

- Does your marketing motivate prospects to come to you and give you their contact information?

4. Malfunctioning or Non-Existent Systems

If your marketing is working, prospects will call your office or stop by your web site. You want to make it as easy as possible for prospects to get in touch with you, and you want to collect their contact information. Again, this sounds obvious, but how many times have you been frustrated by menu-driven answering systems that didn't list the item you called about? (Or made you go through too many steps to find it?) Or a web site with no name, email address or phone number of a person who could answer your questions. And many phone systems and web sites aren't set up to capture visitors' contact information.

- Do you have automated systems that make it easy for prospects to contact your company?

- Do you have automated systems that make it easy for prospects to give you their contact information?

Marketing involves generating leads, converting them to clients and reselling to clients. If you're not attracting the number of customers and clients you want, make sure your marketing strategy isn't full of holes.

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The author, Marketing Coach, Charlie Cook, helps independent professionals and small business owners who are struggling to attract more clients. To get the free marketing guide, '7 Steps to Get More Clients and Grow Your Business' visit www.charliecook.net or write ccook@charliecook.net

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