

Use Hands-on Marketing to Sell Like Crazy

By Alvin Apple

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I have a neighbor who, last year, started her own house-cleaning service. Paula had been living on a shoe-string for years, and now that her children had all reached school age, she decided she needed to enter the workforce. She was looking for something that would pay well, but would still leave her free to make her own schedule and to be there for her kids as needed. Her friends, me included, had always commented on what an immaculate house she kept, and her idea for a house-cleaning service sprang from these compliments.

Getting her first clients was easy. There were a few busy families in our neighborhood who were eager, even desperate to use her services and expertise. The woman who shares a back fence with me who just started a high-paying, but really demanding job with an accounting firm, and the husband and wife sales team around the corner, among others, retained Paula's services almost immediately.

Once Paula had settled into a routine with her new clients, she found she wanted more. Her clients were really happy with her work, but due to the nature of the business, most only wanted her to come in once a week, or even once every two weeks. Considering she spent about two hours per job, she found she was working about 10 hours per week. This was a good start, but not nearly enough.

Paula came to me one afternoon seeming a little frustrated. "I know you give business advice to people with small businesses," she said, "but how about people with tiny businesses? If this business is going to fly, I really need to get the word out, but I don't have more than a few dollars to spare."

We sat and talked about it for a few minutes. I asked her if she was willing to give up a few hours of leisure time, say a few Saturday afternoons, and if she could possibly get her kids to help out. She said yes, and I told her that that was all she

needed, that and a few dollars to print up flyers and maybe make a sign or two, oh, and to buy the ingredients for a few batches of cookies. She asked what I was getting at, and I gave her these hands-on, almost-free marketing tips.

1. Saturday Afternoon at the Mall. Set up a table outside your local mall or shopping center and hand out cookies and punch. Have a big banner advertising your business, and enough flyers or business cards for potential clients to take with them. Maybe even have a raffle for one free service or product, like one free trial house-cleaning.

2. Signs in your vehicle. Make a professional looking sign that has your business name and phone number in big clear print. Park your car in a conspicuous spot for a few hours when you don't need it and put the sign in your window.

3. Pinup Flyers. Make a flyer giving all the basics about your business. Make sure the flyer is simple and easy to read. Avoid too much type or pictures. Have tear off tabs at the bottom with your business name and phone number.

4. Use Your Imagination. Once you're on a roll with this kind of stuff, you'll automatically think of a lot more ways to go about it. Listen to your own ideas, they're probably great.

Well, Paula started out with a Saturday afternoon at the mall. She told me that within a couple of weeks she had pulled in five new clients. Later that week I noticed a few flyers downtown with her name and number above a big picture of a scrub-brush and mop. I learned from her later that, over the course of a few more weeks, she had pulled in another three clients, and was getting near her limit. She couldn't have been happier, and she said she had spent a total of about 10 hours and 30 bucks.

So remember, when you're just getting started in business, there's often no need to go with a big expensive marketing strategy. Keep it hands-on, and before you know it, your business will be bigger than you ever imagined. There's money to be made out there if you just know how to do it.

Alvin Apple helps everyday people start businesses they will enjoy. Then he teaches them how to succeed. Read all his helpful strategies, including his latest article, "Gender Equality in Business" at <http://AlvinApple.com> . Reach Alvin at 801-328-9006 or alvin@drnunley.com.

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