

A Beginner's Checklist to Promoting an Online Business (Part 3)

By Angela Wu

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Angela Wu
angela@onlinebusinessbasics.com

Online Business Basics <http://onlinebusinessbasics.com/>

For those of us who operate Internet home businesses, 'cyberspace' is so convenient that it's easy to forget that people still exist out there in the 'real world'. Part 3 of our 'checklist' series on promoting your online business provides you with a few tips on how to reach your audience offline.

[Note: Parts 1 and 2 are available online at:

* <http://onlinebusinessbasics.com/articles/checklist1.html>

* <http://onlinebusinessbasics.com/articles/checklist2.html>]

PART 3: Marketing Techniques for the 'Real World'

1. Business cards. Leave a few in the local library or with other local businesses where prospects gather (with permission, of course); include a card in your postal mail; tack up a card on the bulletin board at your grocery store, etc. One place that offers quality, professional business cards at reasonable prices is ExtraValue.com, <http://www.extravalue.com/> . On a tight budget? Go to VistaPrint for free trial cards: <http://www.vistaprint.com/> .
2. Direct mail. Flyers, brochures, catalogs, coupons.... there are all sorts of things you can send through the mail. Need help? Freelancers can create pretty much any type of direct mail promotional items for you at competitive rates. Try <http://buildyourhomebiz.com/rd/gethelp.html> .
3. Use your car! How much time do you spend driving (or, unfortunately, sitting stuck in traffic)? Take advantage of this opportunity by placing your URL on your car for everyone to see. Web Decals offers custom-printed decals that quickly and easily attach to your car's

windshield: <http://buildyourhomebiz.com/rd/webdecal.html>

It's also a good idea to keep a few business cards, brochures, flyers, or other information in your car that you can give out to people who stop to inquire about your business.

4. Newspaper advertising. Keep in mind that classified ads are usually extremely short; you'll need a punchy, compelling ad that fits into just a few lines. Nationwide Newspapers offers classified advertising in over 8000 newspapers across the United States: <http://www.nationwideadvertising.com/> U.S. Media Inc., <http://www.usmediainc.com/> , specializes in many types of 'offline' advertising, including newspapers, radio, TV, magazines, and more.
5. Get to the 'heart' of your audience by advertising in a quality magazine with loyal readers. U.S. Media Inc. lists a wide variety of trade and consumer magazines and publications. Contact their reps for more information: <http://www.usmediainc.com/>
6. Participate in trade shows. Get exposure by networking with others in your industry. While you're there, you can even make a pen and paper available to collect the email addresses and/or postal addresses of people interested in receiving your newsletter or additional information about your product or service. Visit the Trade Show News Network to search for trade shows of all types in industries worldwide: <http://www.tsnn.com/>
7. Visit your local Chamber of Commerce. They may be able to offer you suggestions on where you can promote your business locally.
8. Send out postcards. Postcards are short, attractive, and readers can easily see your information 'at-a-glance.' Don't forget to display your URL! Extravalue.com is a great place to get professional, quality cards at very reasonable rates.
9. Put your URL on every piece of printed material that leaves your office. This includes brochures, business cards, flyers, faxes, labels, letterhead, invoices, cheques, envelopes, and anything else you can think of.
10. Consider using promotional items such as notepads, pens, mugs, etc. Imprint these items with your URL. Give some away as gifts to your best clients. You can even sell them online! iPrint is one place you can find 'do-it-yourself' promotional items, including t-shirts, golf balls, pens, mugs, clocks, tote bags, and much more:

<http://www.iprint.com/> . And at CafePress.com you can upload your artwork, set your prices, and you're ready to sell.

11. State your URL on your voice mail message. Say your standard spiel, then add something like, 'For more information on [your product], visit our website at www.MyDomain.com .' uReach is a service that offers all-in-one communications service that includes voice mail, email, and faxes. <http://www.ureach.com/>
12. Seek potential partnerships with complementary businesses. For example, let's say you sell a dog training video. You could approach local groomers or dog agility centers and offer to share the cost of their next direct mail campaign: when they mail a postcard or letter inviting their clients to return, you also offer their clients a discount on your dog training video. This way you both reduce your costs... you reach a targeted audience quickly, easily, and through a trusted party (the other business)... and your business 'partner' can make a valuable product available at a discount to their customers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Angela is the editor of Online Business Basics, a practical guide to building a business on a beginner's budget. It's a proven hit with beginners, for the down-to-earth style and loads of instantly useable tips! For details, visit

<http://onlinebusinessbasics.com/article.html>

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