

Get More Clients Now!

By Kimberly Stevens

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Although David has been a graphic designer for a decade, he's only been a business owner for a little over a year. He was becoming increasingly discouraged with his clientele. "I'm the only person in the business, and even though I've been in business for a whole year, I'm still having to spend a lot of time marketing to get new clients. And the ones I do get usually only have one small project for me for the entire year. To top it off, I don't even get to do the kind of work I really enjoy. They all just want the basic logo, business card, letterhead job. I really want to work on full-scale marketing campaigns where I'm designing print ads, direct mailers & media kits. How do I get more of the right clients?"

As you are discovering, David, building a stable of long-term clients with needs that match your interests can be a time-consuming and ongoing effort, but it's worth it in the long run. It's up to you to build a company that attracts clients with higher-end needs. You can't blame the small businesses for whom you are likely working for having a small budget and basic needs. As a sole proprietor, you can certainly understand working on a restricted budget.

So the first thing you need to do is to focus on how you want to position your company in the marketplace. What types of work do you want to do for clients? Do you want to avoid business card layout all together or will you do it if it's for a client who does or will have larger needs in the future? Do you want to develop a niche in which you specialize in doing full-scale marketing campaigns within a specific industry, such as restaurants or high-tech companies? You get the idea - begin by determining what type of work you want. The world of graphic design is big and broad, so it's your job to narrow your focus which will make your company more attractive to potential clients in that field because you spend more time working on projects similar to theirs as compared to a jack-of-all-trades graphic designer.

Next, you need to make sure that everything you use to present your company to the marketplace reflects your new positioning. This may mean revising the content of your web site and brochures and re-wording the tagline on your business card. If you don't already have a tag line that you splatter on all of your collateral materials, create one. This is a terrific positioning tool. And, as a graphic designer, you know that you can impact the image someone gets of your company through the design of your company's materials. Do you want to present your company as high-tech, friendly and affordable, or hip and cutting edge? Create a consistent image across the board on everything a prospect would see when encountering your business. If you want to do full-scale marketing campaigns, start with your own. Enlist the help of a designer friend or marketing friend if you tend to have trouble applying your designer brilliance to your own company as many of us do.

Once you know how you want to position your company in the marketplace and you have updated all of your materials, the only thing left to do is present yourself to the people who want what you have to sell. This may be a very different group of people than the ones you've spent the last year with. Many of us cut our marketing teeth at the local chamber of commerce, but they can be full of small, one-person businesses that may not have the need for the services you want to provide.

The best thing to do is to identify what types of companies are going to be attracted to what you are providing. Are they of a certain size, a certain geographic location, a certain industry? Once you've identified the parameters, it's time to determine how you are going to reach them. What associations do they belong to? Can you write articles for that association's newsletter? What networking groups do they attend? Can you join? Do they usually find their vendors from advertisements, referrals, or direct mail? Who else already provides services to them that could potentially provide you an opening into the companies in exchange for a finder's fee or reciprocity (these are called Centers of Influence)? Develop contacts with marketing companies who could potentially bring you in as a subcontractor for their clients' marketing campaigns. Although, they will generally take a cut or mark up your services, perhaps, you'd enjoy focusing on building these relationships so in the future you could focus just on the graphic design aspect of your business, not the client-building part.

This may seem like you are starting from ground zero as you pull away from those groups that you've been networking with during the past year and begin again as a new member in new groups, but soon you will be reaping the rewards of a thriving business working with people you like and doing what you want to do. What could be better?

Once you've established yourself in these new communities, you can't continue to spend half of your week trolling for new clients or you'll cap your income in relatively short order. Your next line of attack should be meeting some Centers of Influence. Read more about how to do this at:

<http://www.askthebizcoach.com/eazines/061802gettingclients.htm>

Download a free copy of *50 Ways to Win New Clients* at:

<http://www.askthebizcoach.com/freebies.htm>

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Kimberly Stevens is a Business Coach who works with entrepreneurs to create profitable & results-oriented businesses. She developed the FastTrack MBO (Mastering Business Ownership) Program as a series of ebooks and teleseminars to help business owners slash their learning curve in half while doubling their rate of success. Experience the MBO Program for free by visiting

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