

Focusing Your Marketing Efforts

By Ramona Creel

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One of my favorite quotes is often used to describe goal-setting -- but it applies equally well to your marketing efforts. We start with Alice lost in the woods in Wonderland, where she comes upon the Cheshire-Cat...

"Cheshire-Puss," she began rather timidly, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat. "I don't much care where..." said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat. "...so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation. "Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "If you only walk long enough."

How does this story apply to marketing? Because there are so many different ways to promote your company -- so many places where you can share information about your business. And you can pour a lot of time and energy (not to mention money!) into marketing without really getting anywhere. That is, unless you have a strategy and know where you want your efforts to take you. You can create an effective **MARKETING PLAN** by asking yourself the following questions:

WHO ARE YOUR POTENTIAL CLIENTS?

Rule number one in the world of marketing is that you can't be all things to all people! You must know exactly who your potential clients are in order to reach them effectively. Your client base is not "anyone who is disorganized" -- but it might be "working moms" or "entrepreneurs" or "elderly people who have to downsize their living environments." And the more specific you can be about your demographics (age, income level, gender, geographic location, etc.), the easier it will be to connect with these clients. Since my area of expertise is Professional Organizing, let me share an example of some demographic groups that I might market to:

- working moms who have kids in daycare or afterschool care
- entrepreneurs who have been in business (less than / at least) 1 year
- elderly homeowners who are moving to a retirement community
- homebuyers who are purchasing a house worth \$200,000+
- busy executives who work an average of 12+hours a day

WHERE ARE YOUR POTENTIAL CLIENTS?

A large part of focusing your marketing efforts is knowing where to find your clients. Are they at home watching TV? Shopping at the grocery store? At the mall? On the internet? Do they attend business networking functions? Or work late at the office? Then that's where you need to market. Choose your venue accordingly. In other words, "don't put fliers on cars if your customers don't drive!" If your clients are:

- working moms, market through daycare centers
- entrepreneurs, market through small business and "start-up" groups
- elderly, market through senior organizations and retirement communities
- new homeowners, market through realtors and mortgage lenders
- executives, market through professional associations

WHAT MARKETING STRATEGIES WILL BEST REACH MY CLIENT?

This is an off-shoot of the previous two questions. It should be fairly simple to determine which methods to use once you know who your prospects are and where to find them. But let's add one additional wrinkle -- how much can you afford to spend on marketing? You might be able reach your audience best by putting a full-page ad in a national magazine -- but can you afford \$27,000 per ad? Start off by testing your marketing message on more reasonably-priced options. Here are some examples of matching the right marketing strategy with your client demographics:

- working moms, put up fliers at daycare centers
- entrepreneurs, give workshops on organizing for small business groups
- elderly, network with the intake staff at retirement communities
- new homeowners, offer referral fees to realtors and mortgage lenders
- executives, write an article for a professional association newsletter

WHY WOULD PROSPECTS PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR MARKETING?

The next step in focusing your promotional efforts (once you know how you want to reach your intended audience) is to hone in on your message. People are bombarded each day by an excess of information -- and we've learned how to selectively ignore about 90% of it. You have to make your message stand out, or it will get lost. Tell potential clients WHY they should be interested in what you have to say -- capture their attention by explaining how they will BENEFIT from your services. In my case:

- working moms will free up more time to spend with their kids
- entrepreneurs will be able to focus again on the work they love
- elderly clients will face less stress when "paring down" their belongings
- new homeowners will be able to unpack and settle in sooner

- executives will be more productive and increase staff productivity

WHEN SHOULD YOU LAUNCH YOUR MARKETING ATTACK?

Timing is everything -- you have to deliver your message at the moment when your prospect is most receptive. But how do you know when that is? Promoting a business is a little like investing in the stock market -- you should commit for the long haul (did you realize that most business people give up on a marketing strategy just before it begins to pay off?) But you should also be prepared to take advantage of any special to really connect with your potential clients. Some examples of these strategic marketing efforts I might use include targeting:

- working moms around mother's day or the start/end of summer break
- entrepreneurs during a start-up or expansion phase
- elderly clients when they start the process of "cleaning out"
- new homeowners when they are starting their house search
- executives on "Clean Off Your Desk Day" or "Organize Your Files Week"

HOW DO YOU EXPECT YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS TO TURN OUT?

If you don't know what you want out of your promotional strategies, how will you ever know if they have succeeded? It's critical that you set marketing goals, just like you would with any other area of your business -- but simply saying, "I want more clients," is too vague. "I want this ad to bring in 20 new clients and double my mailing list," is SPECIFIC and MEASURABLE. It's easy to track of your marketing efforts if you will:

- create a marketing calendar indicating when each promotion will run
- assign each promotion a unique "code" or name
- record the number of responses and \$ in sales each effort generates
- compare your expectations with your results
- ditch the ideas that didn't work and double up on the ones that did!

Of course, you can always toss a lot of information about your business into the wind -- and some of it will randomly end up in the hands of potential clients. Or, you can decide to focus your promotional efforts on those people and strategies that will give you the biggest return on your investment. If you treat your marketing like a game of darts and only aim for the bullseye -- you will come a lot closer to hitting the mark (why do you think it's called MARKeting?!)

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Ramona Creel is a Professional Organizer and the founder of OnlineOrganizing.com -- a web-based one-stop shop offering everything that you need to get organized at home or at work. At OnlineOrganizing.com, you may get a referral to an organizer near you, shop for the latest organizing products, get tons of free tips, and even learn how to become a professional organizer or

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