

Words By Wendy

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Small Business Marketing Tips

How to make your promotional dollars work harder

As a long-time marketing consultant, and a small business owner myself, I know that marketing can seem like a necessary evil which comes with a high price tag, and no guarantees.

But it doesn't have to be that way! Use your marketing dollars wisely and they will work harder, and go further, than you ever imagined:

- ✓ **1. Rethink Your Definition of Advertising.** Low-cost, or no-cost ways to build your business without using expensive, mass media advertising.
- ✓ **2. Target Your Message.** How to make sure that you are only paying to reach real prospects.
- ✓ **3. Branding Yourself.** Making the most of that all-important first impression.
- ✓ **4. Understanding Your Creative Approach.** In this section, covering layout, headlines and copy, you will learn how to make your marketing materials irresistible and persuasive.

Read on, and find out how to stretch those dollars...

The Relationship Marketing Copywriter

***Websites and Internet Marketing * Content Marketing * Print Marketing ***

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1. Forget about Advertising

Rethink your definition of advertising and engage in some 'below-the-line' business building activities which will very cost-effectively help you reach new clients:

- Networking. You already know that this is a great way to spread your company name, meet new prospects and enjoy some time with fellow business owners.
- Search Engine Marketing. Use online techniques to draw traffic to your website; techniques like search engine optimization, social media, blogging, e-zines, e-press releases, links and more.
- Write Articles. Whatever your area of expertise, there is almost certainly a subject on which you could write an interesting and informative article for a magazine, newspaper or online publication. You may not get paid for such a submission, but many publications will include a short bio, as well as your contact information. This exposure is worth its weight in gold as it increases awareness of your company and establishes you as an expert in your field.
- Press Releases. Local newspapers and business publications are always looking for story ideas. Whenever you have a new product, a special event, or even a good story, send out a press release. If it doesn't get used, you have lost nothing, but if it does you get some great free publicity. There are also several free e-press release services that will distribute your press releases online.
- Give Out Your Card. Give your card to everyone you meet. They may not seem like a prospect, but you may be surprised. Or they may know someone who is.
- Follow Up. When you meet anyone follow up with a quick e-mail, or even drop them a brochure in the mail. It never hurts to keep the lines of contact open, and reinforce what it is you do. But, please do not automatically subscribe them to your blog or e-newsletter without inviting them to opt-in.
- Ask for Referrals and Testimonials. Always ask people if they know someone who might be interested in your product or service. They might just think of someone who needs exactly what you have to offer. Referrals from your clients, and written testimonials come with huge credibility and have great potential for building your business.

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2. Target your Message

This may sound obvious, but one of the best ways to throw money away is to advertise in mass media, in the hope of reaching a few prospects. Before considering any marketing activity make sure you have given some serious thought to the following basic information:

- Who your prospect is, and where you are likely to find them.
- How many new clients you need.
- How much any new client is likely to spend, and how much they are worth to you.

This will enable you to analyze different media in terms of the cost per new client, and the value that a new client has to you.

A client who will spend a considerable amount over time is obviously worth more to you than a one-time client purchasing a minor product or service. The cost of acquiring the first kind of client can therefore be higher than the cost of acquiring the second. So, always think 'return on investment' when considering any marketing activities.

Remember, to acquire a lot of 'small spenders', it may be worth pepper-spraying a message in the mass media. If, on the other hand, you only require one good client, it would be more worthwhile to send a highly informative and compelling mailing, with appropriate follow-up, to a few carefully targeted prospects.

3. Look Professional

Just as you wouldn't turn up to a business meeting in your gardening clothes, it is vital that your company is represented at all times by the most professional materials possible.

Make sure your website and all your online marketing materials are professionally produced, well-written and user-friendly. Invest in professionally designed and printed brochures and cards. The cost will be worth it in terms of the impression you will create.

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4. Understand the Power of the Creative Approach

Your promotional materials may be professionally produced, but the graphics and copy are what take you beyond the initial impression, and closer to that sale.

The following guidelines are the results of years of research and testing. Believe me, they all make a difference to the response you can expect. Analyze your current materials to see how many of these rules they follow:

1) Layout

People will scan your printed materials, or your web pages, in the following order:

1. Picture
2. Headline
3. Copy

Present it in that order, and you make it more comfortable for your prospect to take it all in. In the end you will increase the chance of your message being read.

Avoid very busy layouts which detract from the copy, and confuse the eye. In particular, try to avoid having white or pale type on a dark background. It may look great, but it is hard to read and will turn off some of your prospects.

And if you have photos or graphics, remember that more people read captions than the body copy. If a caption would add in any way to the selling message, then include one.

2) Headline

- Always put your headline in upper and lower case, rather than all capitals.
- Ending your headline with a period is an invitation to the prospect to stop reading.
- Avoid overly-long headlines – about eight words should be the maximum.

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3) Copy

This is obviously a subject very dear to my heart, but I cannot stress enough the importance of well-written, compelling copy that leads your prospect through the process of education and conviction toward your desired course of action.

Whether you are writing your own copy, or assessing some-one else's, try to ensure that your copy always follows as many of these rules as possible. It will make a difference!

- Long copy sells. Remember - you need to provide precisely the amount of information needed to move your prospect to the next stage; whether that is to request more information, subscribe to your blog, buy or donate.
Your copy must be concise, to-the-point and clear, but do not be afraid to tell the whole story. In most situations, as long as your copy is interesting and relevant to the reader, they will read as much as you can tell them.
- Lead with real benefits. Your prospect does not really want to know about your company or product – they want to know what is in it for them!
- In print materials use a serif type-face (those little tails on the ends of each letter make the text easier to read), but online choose a san serif typeface instead (no little tails).
- Break up long text with sub-heads, bolding and italics, indented paragraphs, bullet points etc. Those visual devices make long copy easier to assess for relevance, and also to scan. If your prospect can pick out sections that are of particular interest they are more likely to attend to your full message.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs fairly short.
- Use a 12-point typeface. It is by far the most comfortable size to read.
- When writing a sales letter, always include a P.S., and never end a page at the end of a sentence or paragraph. If the sentence carries onto the next page, then so will your reader.

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About The Author

Wendy Zak is The Relationship Marketing Copywriter. She uses tested and proven direct response techniques to write marketing copy that keeps your prospects reading, nodding their heads and responding.

As a freelance copywriter, Wendy has worked with small businesses of all types and in a wide variety of sectors. She helps them by planning and writing materials that are targeted, readable, compelling and persuasive.

Wendy worked for many years in direct marketing and advertising agencies in England and Canada – including Ogilvy & Mather in both countries. She worked as both a copywriter and a campaign manager, so she brings to the copywriting process a potent mixture of creativity combined with strategic expertise.

Wendy specializes in writing internet marketing pieces such as websites, e-zine articles, blogging and social media content – as well as print pieces designed to draw traffic to your website. These ‘search engine marketing’ media provide a perfect opportunity to build relationships, make connections and generate responses; and Wendy’s direct response experience enables her to maximize the potential of those interactions.

Do you want to harness the power of copy designed to engage, educate and inspire; copy powerful enough to motivate a reaction and a response?

If so, call Wendy Zak now on **403-279-3606** or email [**wendy@wordsbywendy.ca**](mailto:wendy@wordsbywendy.ca)

Please visit [**www.wordsbywendy.ca**](http://www.wordsbywendy.ca) to find out more, and to sign up for my blog.

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