

101 Ways to promote Your Business

Expert knowledge means success

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Introduction

This publication is dedicated to your business. It provides 101 ways in which you can promote your business. These are tried and tested methods - they all work but not necessarily all at once or for everyone. Try them to see which ones can work for you and your business.

There are four sections in which we've grouped similar types of business promotion:

- a) "Give something away";
- b) "Do it differently";
- c) "Empower your customers";
- d) "Pay attention to reactions".

Good luck.

Section A - Give Something Away

1. Award a Surprise Rebate

After completing a job, return a small sum of money to your customers to share "savings".

2. Send a Present

Pick an obscure point on the annual calendar - such as the Anniversary of the Queen's Accession to the Throne - as the day to send a gift or card.

3. Package Pairing

Pairings are products presented in twos - one item in the pairing is for the customer to use, and the other is to be "given" away.

4. A Pairing for Grocery Companies and Pharmacies

Put two examples of any new items you want customers to try - a jar of mustard, a natural cereal or the like - into an identifiable plastic bag or other packaging with two copies of a flyer that describes how the item can best be enjoyed and suggesting that the second item be given to a relative, friend or colleague.

5. A Pairing For Publishers

Put a paper wrapper around two copies of a book, tape, journal, CD-Rom or other published work. On the piece of paper inform the customer that they have been given a second copy of the book to give to their family or friends.

6. Provide a Related Service

Find a natural linkage between your business and the service or product you can offer to generate the conversations you need - for example, The Insurance Company also provides a service to check your fire extinguishers.

7. The Power of the Phone Cards

Telephone cards are a mechanism that permits the prepayment of calls and is the primary ways to communicate word of mouth comments.

8. A Phone Card for Travellers

Phone cards can promote a business and provide an incentive to talk at the same time.

9. A Phone Card Carrier

Phone cards can be presented to customers attached to a folder that includes a promotional message from the sponsor.

10. Recycle Wrap

Create a generic gift-wrap bag, box, and/or ribbon that invites recycling.

11. Create a unique Souvenir

Find something that you can give away that others will want to display long enough to start a conversation - for example, something to wear-an unusual piece of clothing or a particularly impressive certificate.

12. Give away a special hat

Hats are fun, useful and particularly effective as billboards to generate conversations.

13. To be (proprietary terms) or not to be

Items that are identified with the provider are always particularly effective. Offering a product as your own house brand is always impressive - whether it is silver polish or boot polish.

14. Bottle your salad dressing - or anything else

Take the aspect of your business that makes it unique among all of your competitors and find a way to "Package" it.

15. Free Phones

Send customers a second example of the product they purchased when they provide their impressions of it over a free phone.

Section B - Do It Differently

16. *The Double Postcard*

Postcards start conversations and generate positive word of mouth comments between sender and the recipient - for example, a postcard split in two with two separate pictures on it.

17. *If not Matchbooks, then try blank paper books*

Instead of a matchbook as a traditional reminder of a restaurant, hotel or special event, offer look-a-like "Books" containing blank pieces of paper for notes.

18. *A Middle Eastern Christmas Card*

Nearly everyone seems to send seasonal cards at Christmas time, but how many stand out enough to evoke a comment?

19. *Send "Tasters" Home*

As more and more people leave restaurants with leftovers to take home, so it makes sense to send samples along to share with others.

20. *Send "Tasters" Home - but with a gift certificate*

For even greater impact, present a gift certificate to a special customer along with a "taster".

21. *Cyber Certificates*

Any business can offer coupons for their customers to award to the customer's colleagues, clients and contacts - for example, a special certificate could be sent out by companies who did most of their work on the Internet.

22. *Mixing Apples and Oranges - Literally*

As a health-conscious world learns more about their diets, profit-conscious businesses should learn more about what makes people talk.

23. *What makes your Product Famous*

Because personalities draw public attention, provide a favourite individual with a sample of your product in the hope that it might be exposure that engenders comments from others.

24. *Get your Message on a Clock Face*

They can remind customers that it is time to set an appointment.

25. *It's time for...*

Remind clients of the need for a special service and encourage them to bring in a contact at the same time.

26. *Clip Calendars*

Create pre-printed postcards to attach to an annual calendar.

27. *Battery Check*

Because Batteries often need changing, create a special reminder for clients.

28. *Document Review*

Just as batteries need changing, so professional firms should regularly review the work they do for clients.

29. *An Unusual Identification Tag*

Luggage tags are always noticeable while waiting around hotels, train stations and airports - and become an easy basis on which to start a conversation with a stranger.

30. *Variations on the Luggage Tag*

You could develop a number of different worded, coloured tags for a number of different uses.

31. *The Mouse Pad Variant*

You could hand out this computer accessory with an expanded mnemonic to your customers.

32. *The Screen Saver Variant*

Same Mnemonic, different design for use with computer screen protection software.

33. *Dedicate something to a customer*

Pick a food item in a restaurant, an area in a factory or a room in an office suite to name after a customer.

34. *Customer Appreciation Day*

Retailers should give a bonus discount to those who bring their friends, relatives, colleagues or contacts with them to shop.

35. *Give your customers a valuable service*

Provide your moderate-income customers with free elements of what you offer your wealthier customers for free.

36. *Christmas Lights*

Electricians can offer to erect holiday display lights for their customers.

37. *Water Filters*

Plumbers can change the drinking water filters on a periodic basis for their customers.

38. *Motion Sensors*

Estate Agents can arrange to have sensor lights cleaned and adjusted for their clients.

39. *Moth Balls*

Carpet Cleaners can arrange to have moth balls and other pest control devices checked and replaced.

40. *Don't hide your message.*

Make sure that your message is bold and highlighted among other messages. Do not allow your message to simply blend in with all the others.

41. *Make life easier*

Provide potential clients with a planning document or easy-to-use checklist.

42. *Wear something remarkable*

Put a badge, pin, ribbon, chain or some other device that causes others to comment.

43. *Customer Award Programme*

Recognise your customers for their help and award something remarkable to them.

44. *An Exotic Flower Display*

The next time you want to say thank you to a client for a favour done or a referral made, do it with panache.

Section C - Empower Your Customers

45. *Let your clients give away your give-aways*

Whenever you decide to give something special away to promote your products or services, let your current clients do the actual giving.

46. *Season Tickets*

Whether you have permanent seats to football, rugby or cricket matches or to philharmonic recitals, rock concerts, or theatre groups, let your customer select the people to enjoy an event.

47. *Lottery Tickets*

Create a draw for either products you make or products you acquire.

48. *Ultimate Black Book*

If you have created a good premium, developed a proprietary product, or found an unusual gift, make it available for your best customer to give away on your behalf.

49. *Double Message Cards*

Create a mailing piece that your best customer can send to their contacts.

50. *Message about a Freight Forwarding Company*

Developed a double message card mailer for a freight forwarding company. The Mailer consisted of a memo from the company to its customers and two identical, but separable, postcards. The memo reminded customers of the services provided by the firm and offered a discount if they would send two postcards to their friends.

51. *Messages about a resort*

The key to messages is finding a way to encourage the recipient to take a moment to address the accompanying postcards and send them on.

52. *Postcards*

Retail stores, civic groups, and others should reproduce a photograph, logo or other symbol on a post card for the use of their customers.

53. *Client Vouchers*

Professionals can create an original certificate - with a special offer or discount - to give to their best clients to award in turn to their friends, contacts and associates.

54. *Customer Speak*

Place a guest book on the counter near the cash register inviting customers to note their favourite employee, aspect of the business or the best product offered by the establishment.

55. *Client Speak*

Invite your clients to "speak" for you with objects rather than words. See the next few examples.

56. *Key rings*

Distribute special versions of this ancient necessity.

57. *Outdoor thermometers and rain gauges.*

Provide something everybody can use and from which everybody in the subsequent chain of supply can benefit.

58. *Passport to services*

Create an eight-page mock passport offering free services to the holder.

59. Miniature Menus

Restaurants can create a miniature of their menus to mail on behalf of their patrons.

60. What's your favourite part?

Use a postcard to let patrons describe their favourite aspect of your facility.

61. A voucher system for professionals

Develop a voucher that entitles the holder to a particular service.

62. A voucher system for repairers

Develop a voucher that entitles the holder to particular service from a professional repair person.

63. Favourite sayings

Identify your business or activity with a saying, slogan or theme and put it everywhere.

64. The reminder sticker

Print self-stick labels for your client's use with important information for them on it.

65. Business Tours

Encourage teachers at your local schools to bring their students for a tour of your facility.

66. It's the season for change

Send a regular reminder - annually or every six months - to clients to do things for themselves.

67. Product up-date

Computer software companies have mastered the upgrade reminder, creating a captured market in the process, for every change in their products.

68. Alert-a-month

Surprise someone with an unexpected reminder and you may be surprised at the response.

69. A league of their own

Create an organisation of related, but non-competitive businesses, to share customers among themselves.

70. Put your best and your brightest out front

Select and reward your most enthusiastic and capable employees to be first to respond to customer needs.

71. Answering basic questions

Train all employees - from the lowest to the loftiest - how to respond to key questions about your business.

72. Answering basic question - in English

Many employees who are in closest contact with customers do not put things into plain English.

73. Customer response manual

Prepare a manual with most commonly asked questions and the most current answers.

74. The customer newsletter

Share not only news of your special offers and new acquisitions, but inside news of your industry as well.

75. Keep in touch

If formal newsletters seem beyond your capabilities, send good news/bad news notes from time to time.

76. Whatever sticks to the ceiling

Offer your posters and other large format advertising for the ceilings of rooms where people rest.

77. Take customers into your confidence

Letting customers know about both the positive and negative aspects of your business can build loyalty and generate support.

78. Keep 'em laughing

Pass good jokes along to your customers and *their* contacts are likely to ask: "Where'd you hear that?"

79. Let me study that...

Getting people to talk about the untalkable sometimes requires a "study".

80. Never hide your light under a bushel

Let your customers know exactly - and often - why your business is different from its competitors.

Section D - Pay Attention To Reactions

81. Eavesdropping is not always impolite

Find places to listen to your customers talk and learn how you can improve your business.

82. Watch 'em read

Observing exactly how people react to the written word often reveals volumes about their true feelings.

83. First impressions can be among the strongest.

Capture your customer's initial observations to reinforce the positive and correct the negatives they perceive.

84. Computer Literacy

Create a special file on your computer reserved for the profiles of your customers' likes and dislikes.

85. Thank You's that pack a powerful punch.

When clients/customers chance to tell you about why they keep coming back, why not give them a way to tell others the same thing?

86. That's a print

Publish the suggestions and ideas that customers provide you in a book.

87. The Contest

Encourage a local secondary school to organise a writing contest around the theme: "Why I Would Like to Run a Business Like XYZ Limited".

88. Run informal focus groups

Conduct discussions from time to time among small representative samples of your customer base.

89. Make restitution immediately

Have a certificate or coupon at the ready whenever a refund is called for.

90. More Customer speak

Invite customers to offer constructive ideas for improving your business.

91. What does the competition offer?

Buy products and services from your principal competitors to study what they do differently from you.

92. Mock situations

Create questions, problems and situations to test how your employees respond to complaints, mini-crises and emergencies.

93. Negative time

Whenever you ask a customer to do you a favour be sure to offer them a reward.

94. Ask me about....

Making bumper stickers, label pins and signboards generate word of mouth comments.

95. Ask for referrals...differently

Make sure you know what the customer will say about you before you follow up on the customer's referral.

96. Plan for the worst to get the best

Assume everything that could go wrong will go wrong - and think through possible solutions to each problem envisioned.

97. Treat customers better than you expect to be treated.

One of the key factors in generating word of mouth commentary is to exceed the customer's expectations about the product or service.

98. Seek information, not approval

Ask questions to get information you need, not questions that yield answers you want to hear.

99. Test everything

Make certain everything about your product or service works better than advertised, but keep that fact quiet.

100. Start Early

Make every business contact an opportunity to plant the seeds of a word of mouth comment.

101. Tell 'em what to say

When you are trying to stimulate word of mouth comments, don't leave it up to the customer alone to decide how to promote your business.

Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues.

We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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