

BEGINNING THE MARKETING JOURNEY



Marketing plays a key part in business development. So, what do you do and how do you do it?

First of all, remember the golden rule – “If nobody knows who you are, what you do and the how they could benefit from your product or service, the phone will never ring and you will fail to win new business”.

Know your market - You need to identify who your potential customers are. Do your research, identify the socio-economic groups who are likely to need your product or service. Now educate them – aim to demonstrate to your potential customers what your product / service offering is, the benefits to them of purchasing from you and let them know how to get in contact with you should they wish to do business.

Avoid copying others - Learning from your competitors is one thing. “Me-too” marketing is another. Simply copying your competitors will not win new business for you. Instead, observe what is working for your competitors and tweak the strategy in order to develop a new marketing message which is unique to you and your business and differentiates you from the competition.

If in doubt, ask for help - Many business people will spend time, energy and lots of money doing the wrong thing and getting poor results before deciding to buy in a little help. Be honest with yourself, if you don't have the expertise in-house, commit a little bit of budget to getting advice from a marketing agency or consultant.

Invest in marketing materials - Decide what marketing materials are most appropriate for your business. Do you need a website, business cards and brochures? Ask yourself, how do your customers find out about you and your competitors. If the answer is “online”, then you need a website. If the answer is “through referrals” then you need to embed yourself into the local business community by joining local interest groups, the chamber of commerce, etc.

Communicate - As per the golden rule – you need to make sure that people know who you are, what you do and what the benefits of purchasing your products or services are to them. Write articles for the local and online press, start an email marketing campaign, host seminars on industry topics and start communicating with your customers. If you are offering the right product or service and people know where to find you and that you are knowledgeable, the sales will come.

Wi-Fi NETWORK SECURITY



It is almost expected that businesses offer Wi-Fi as a facility to their customers these days. However, having a guest Wi-Fi network adds a security risk to your business. Using appropriate security software, firewalls, etc. can help mitigate against such risks.

Securing your wireless access points will help you to protect your network from hackers, viruses and malicious software. Hackers no longer need to hack into their victims computer directly and can obtain personal information simply by being connected to the same network as that user.

Even in a scenario not involving identity theft, unauthorized access uses network resources and having a large number of people connected to a single network could slow a home or office network substantially. A strong password paired with suitable router settings could reduce the risk of unauthorised access and ensure that your data is protected.

You should secure you Wi-Fi network with a password. If you have a guest network for your customers, you should password protect this too and change the password regularly. Your customers can be provided with the password if and when they need to access your network.

Most wireless access points come with either a default password such as “Admin”, “password”, or some other simple phrase that is meant to be used to configure the device for use the first time it's connected. After configuration, this password should be changed. There are several encryption types from WEP-16bit to WPA2. A good rule of thumb to remember when choosing an encryption type is to choose a type that is both secure and suits user's needs. For most purposes WEP-64 or WEP-128 bit encryption should be enough for most standard home or small business networks. However, WPA or WPA2 could be the best choice if higher security is needed (for example if your business stores highly sensitive documents such as customer financial information).

Wireless security is often perceived as something complex and difficult. However, in reality it is fairly easy and many of the same steps used to secure a standard desktop or laptop computer can be applied to wireless security as well. However, ultimately it's up to the user to research their security needs and then implement a proper solution for the needs of their business.

TIPS FOR MOTIVATING YOUR TEAM



Learning how to manage a team effectively is one of the most difficult skills any manager has to develop. Keeping your team motivated, enthused and focused on the firm's goals is critical to the success of your business, but how do you do that exactly? Here are a few tips to help you motivate your team and bring them with you as you strive to move your business forward.

It starts with you - Your team will look to you for guidance and inspiration. No matter what sort of a day you've had, pull it together and be a role model of positive energy whenever you're in sight. Your team will follow suit.

Be open - Share information. Keeping everything as open as possible will lend a sense of ownership to the team. Your employees will feel a part of the business, and once engaged, will often provide suggestions for improvement.

Set Goals - Set targets for your team and let them know when they get there. Don't forget to provide regular feedback to the team. Let them know how they are doing and congratulate them when milestones are achieved.

Listen to your team – they need to know that you understand (and care about) their concerns, challenges and problems. Never assume that because someone worries often that they worry about nothing - often team members will spot potential issues long before they happen. Give feedback, acknowledge that you have listened to what your team has to say and provide them with answers where possible.

Give them ownership - Let your team have responsibility and a degree of autonomy for their part of a project. Allowing them to take control will give them ownership and a sense of personal responsibility. They will want to impress you and win your approval. This can only benefit your business.

PITCH PERFECT

Our “elevator pitch” is the short, concise answer to “What do you do” that you can give in the time it takes you to move up a couple of floors in an elevator with someone. So, if you were to write your elevator pitch today how would you do it?

Here are a few tips:

To begin with, write down one sentence about who you are and what you do. This can be something along the lines of “I am an accountant who works with local businesses and helps with business planning in addition to the traditional audit and tax services.”

Next, write one sentence describing the benefits of what you do. Focus on the customer and what they gain as a result of engaging your services.

The next step is to describe your ideal clients and/or customers. For example you could say, “In general, I specialise in the SME sector, working with owner managed businesses. In particular, I have helped a lot of owner-managers with succession planning issues.”

Now you need to describe what makes you and your firm unique. This is your value proposition – what it is that you can offer to your client that they will value and that your competitors do not or cannot offer.

The final part of your elevator pitch is the most important – asking for the business. This can be something subtle such as, “perhaps we could meet for a coffee next week to discuss the requirements of your business and identify areas that I can help you with”.

Your elevator pitch is now complete. Type it up, save it, print a copy to keep in your briefcase and memorise your pitch so that you have it with you when you need it (which could well be in an elevator!)



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