

Lesson 14: Fun With Marketing Materials

Christopher Duncan

No matter what type of marketing you do, chances are good that you're going to need some support. In fact, many marketing materials are so effective that they're almost ubiquitous in the business world. It's just a given that you should have them.

However, even though people are familiar with items from business cards to brochures, it's common for businesses to create them without a clear picture in mind of what they should accomplish. If you don't know what the goals of your materials are, you won't design them effectively and thus they won't help generate revenue.

The Usual Suspects

How many types of marketing materials are you familiar with? Grab a pen. Chances are good that it has someone's company name on it. While you're at it, get something to write on. If you happen to be on the road at the moment, you might have to settle for a pad with the hotel's logo on it. Both of these are marketing materials, of course.

Now that you have your writing utensils handy, start a list of every other type of material that you can imagine. Some will be easy and obvious, such as flyers, coupons and display ads. However, if you let your imagination wander, you'll soon be jotting down things like bumper stickers, calendars and even t-shirts. In fact, if you start to run into blank page syndrome, just step outside and look around. You'll be amazed by how many marketing messages you're bombarded with on every corner.

Review Your Arsenal

Naturally, some of these materials will be more relevant to your business than others. If you sell luxurious, expensive furniture then you're probably going to invest a lot of time and money into things that are visual in nature and illustrate the beauty of your offerings. This is less of an issue if you're selling pizza, where a page full of coupons may be among your promotional favorites.

Having refined your list somewhat, take a look at each of these items, whether you currently use them in your business or they're just on the list of things you want to add. For each of these, ask yourself a few important questions. First, for a given item, what is its purpose? If you're like most people, you'll find that this often creates a blank space in your thoughts. For instance, most people think of a business card as a given. It offers people a way to contact you. However, is this all that it does? Business cards may also offer discounts, promote specials, even drive web or foot traffic.

With that in mind, take a look at each of your materials with an analytical mind. Once you know its purpose, it's worth questioning how you would gauge its effectiveness. Is it worth the money because

Marketing Mischief

Practical Strategies for American Marketing

it's getting the job done for you? How will you know? With that in mind, you can also start to see what pieces have been the most effective for you. If you contemplate why they work, you'll gain valuable insights into the other types of materials that you might also find useful.

Remember Your Model

As you analyze the purpose and effectiveness of your marketing materials, you should reflect back on our previous exercises that focus on the type of sales model your company employs. Even if your favorite pizza place makes heavy use of discount coupons, chances are good that this won't impress someone looking to spend six figures on a fancy sports car.

How do you make your money? If you generate most of your sales through ecommerce on your web site, expensive printed brochures may not offer the best bang for the buck. On the other hand, if you have a crew of sales reps making client calls and selling expensive products or services, the boost of effective leave behinds can make a significant difference in your closing ratio.

Use What Works

Know how you do business, and then build a collection of effective marketing materials that support that model. While you're at it, review what you're currently using and drop anything that no longer fits the way you do things. You'll not only get a better return on your investment, you'll make more money.