



Marketing and Sales

**How to Market
Your Small Business**

Self-Employment For One Stop Customers

GETTING THE CUSTOMER TO BUY

Marketing is an important component to any business. It's what "sells" your unique service or product to your community. Once you have completed your business plan and have done a feasibility study to determine that your product or service will sell, the next step is to put together a marketing plan.

While a formal Marketing plan may not be necessary for your success, it is a strategy that can help you in your planning. In addition, if you are planning to pursue other entities to fund or invest in your business, a written plan will be critical to successfully acquiring funders.

This brochure contains some first steps on developing a marketing plan. They include:

- Basic outline of a marketing plan
- Strategies for low cost marketing
- Successful sales strategies
- Resources

DEVELOPING A MARKETING PLAN

A marketing plan is a written document that identifies your market niche as well as a plan for ongoing success. Marketing plans help define your business and can be useful as a planning tool. A basic marketing plan is composed of several different sections. After each section, we've included some questions you might consider and some work space to jot down a few of your own marketing ideas. Answers to many of these questions will take time and research, but it will be valuable information to properly position your business.

Mission Statement: What are the philosophies or core beliefs of your small business? _____

Objectives and Goals: What do you want to achieve?

Market Analysis: What are the strengths of your business? What are the weaknesses? What are the opportunities? Who are your competitors? Why are they your competitors? What will your competitive advantage be? _____

Market Strategies: Describe your product or service in detail. What makes your product unique or service valuable? Where will you place your product? How much will you charge? How will your pricing compare to the competition? If you intend to compete on price, prove that you can do so and still be profitable. How do you plan to promote your product? Who will be your customers? Why will they be your customers? What is the size of your target market? How will you advertise? What media will you use? Newspaper? Fliers?

Implementation Plan: How are you going to begin and keep your business going? What resources are available to you? What tools will be used? _____

Evaluation Plan: What are your expected outcomes? Develop milestones you hope to achieve and evaluate what is working and what is not.

There are products available that can help you develop your plan. Look into computer based programs if you need additional assistance. You can also find a tremendous amount of information on the Internet. Do some research before starting your plan to make the process easier.

STRATEGIES FOR LOW-COST MARKETING

Most small businesses do not have a lot of resources to contribute to a marketing campaign; however, most do not need to reach the marketing level of a large corporation like Ford Motor Company or Microsoft.

Keep your marketing simple. Start with the pieces that are important but do not cost any money to produce.

What's in a name?

Start with the title of your business as the first obvious strategy for successful marketing. What does your business name say about the product you produce or provide? Is your name easy to say and remember? These are all important questions when choosing a name that will sell your product.

Networking - A Key To Success

We hear this all the time, but in self-employment, networking is possibly more important than any other career because it will determine your customer base and ability to sell your product. To do this it will be important for you to show yourself as an expert in the service or product you provide. You can do this in many simple low-cost ways. Be creative and have fun with the process. Consider the following networking opportunities:

- Volunteer at community events or groups.
- Join your local chamber of commerce.
- Participate in craft fairs, community markets, seasonal events, etc.
- Look into teaching a course with the Community Schools programs about the product you provide.
- Partner with other similar or complementary organizations.
- Use mailing lists and e-mail to share information about your product.
- Set up a free sample for potential buyers.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

After starting your business, you need to get the word out that you're ready for customers. One of the easiest ways to do this is to create business cards. Office supply stores carry packages of inexpensive cards that you print from your own printer. Hand them out to everyone: friends, family, customers, potential customers, etc.

You might also consider listing your business in the yellow pages, creating fliers, or making a sign for your business. Look for places you might advertise

that are low cost or free. The more people who know about your business, the more likely you are to get customers.

SUCCESSFUL SALES STRATEGIES

Sales is a component of small business that is often the most difficult. But planning ahead and developing a strategy for selling your product can help to make it easier. Be prepared, you will need to be ready to answer questions about your product or service at any time so planning ahead for these questions will make your business more professional in its approach to sales. The following are some strategies according to Cary Griffin and David Hammis in their book Making Self-Employment Work.

- Make it personal – customers want to see that your business cares about their needs.
- Listen more than you talk – your customer wants you to listen and respond to their needs. This has the potential to create a long-term relationship that will help your business succeed.
- Networking is an ongoing prospect – always be looking for new ways to build your customer base.
- First impressions are critical – your first contact with a potential customer can often make or break your relationship so be sure to plan ahead, have materials ready and be prepared to listen.
- Provide handouts – it is a good idea to put together a marketing packet to hand out to your potential customers. This should explain your product, its features, price and benefits of purchasing your product. This gives potential customers the option

to come to you and to spread the word to others.

- Be prepared for rejection – sometimes a customer may say no at first. Make sure to be polite and leave them with information in case they change their minds. Never burn a bridge with a potential customer by trying to force a sale.
- Stay in touch and follow up with people during and after a sale. The key to successful networking is maintaining relationships.
- Be concise – your customers are busy; be respectful of their time. Keep the talk to a minimum. Be sure to answer questions and follow up, but don't push with too much social talk.

PUBLICATIONS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

The following are just a few resources and products that can be useful in developing your strategy for selling your product:

Making Self Employment Work for People with Disabilities; Cary Griffin and David Hammis, 2003
Brooks Paul H Brooks Publishing Co.

US Small Business Administration -
www.sba.gov

RESOURCES

For additional ideas on small business marketing, and for a valuable list of self-employment resources, please refer to separate Center for Human Development brochures on these topics. Other brochures include:

An Overview of Self-Employment

*What We Mean By Self-Employment:
“I Want To Be My Own Boss”*

*Disability Benefits
and Self-Employment*

Self-Employment: The Business Plan

Self-Employment Resources

Self-Employment Tips And Traps

HELEN'S STORY

The Situation

Helen is a person who uses a wheel chair. She has had a life long passion for arts and crafts and wanted to see if she could develop her own business doing something she loves. She approached DVR and asked for support to develop her business of making decorative Alaskan soaps. Initially they thought it sounded more like a hobby than a business, because they weren't sure there was going to be a market for the products.

Making it Work

Helen took some of her samples, small, clear, fragrant soaps that each have an Alaskan flower inside and literally went door-to-door in her wheel chair showing her products to prospective buyers in the hotel and hospitality industry. Several of the contacts she made agreed to buy the products wholesale and put them in their guest rooms. Once DVR found that Helen indeed had access to a reliable customer base, they reconsidered her request and provided financial support to help start up her business.



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