

# Has Your Current Marketing Lost Its Effectiveness?

It's Time to Look into Some 21st Century Marketing Ideas.

by Maylan Newton

## Call to Action

One of the myths of marketing is that you don't need to market, because if you're good, they will come. Well, those days are gone. We need to stop waiting for the customers to come to us; we need to go get the customers. That's what marketing is.

A lot of shops I know say they market but get no results. When I ask them how they track the results, the truth comes out: they don't, at least not as carefully as they should. You need to know how every customer came to you. If you offer promotions to your regular customers, you need to know which offer brought them in. What made them take action this time? You need to know! Remember that marketing and advertising is an investment in your business, treat it as such and carefully track your return on that investment.

Make sure, too, that your "sales" marketing piece has a "call to action" - a statement that tells the customer what they are suppose to do. "Call now," "limited time," "make an appointment today," and "stop by" are all calls to action. Some marketing pieces may not have a call to action. Refrigerator magnets and calendars, to name two, simply are meant to keep your name in front of the potential or current customers. These are considered passive marketing tools.

Now, to conclude this article, Advertising and Marketing 101, let's talk about targeted vs. broadcast marketing.

Targeted marketing is aimed at a very specific group, has a defined message, and in most cases will give you a higher response rate per dollar spent. Examples of target marketing are direct mail to your customer base, recommended service reminders, thank you cards, demographic-based or specific car-based new customer direct mail, word of mouth, and referrals.

Broadcast marketing is aimed at a large audience, has a general message and typically will have a lower response rate per dollar spent. Examples of broadcast marketing are yellow pages, mass mailing of flyers, coupon books, television, radio, newspapers and magazines.

These two types of marketing have been our main tools in advertising and marketing for years, and, like anything that has been used for years, it loses its effectiveness with time. So here are a few 21st century marketing ideas to look into.

**Rebates.** I think we all belong to some type of rebate program, because most major grocery and stationary stores have them. I mentioned in a previous article a repair shop offering a rebate to business owners for working on the business vehicles and the employees' vehicles; this was a good working example of a "rebate program."

**Loyalty clubs.** Reward your client base for returning to you. A loyalty club program can be anything from a free oil change after buying four to an elaborate program with many benefits of being a member. Some shops sell memberships and some offer them as a benefit of being a repeat customer. People like to feel special and a loyalty club can help you do that.

**Referral programs.** Ask your good customers to send other good customers. Reward the person doing the referrals and give something special to the person they referred. Please be sure that the person who was referred is taken care of, because if they aren't, it will also reflect back to the person who referred them to you.

**Non-sales points of contact.** These include birthday and anniversary cards as well as traditional and non-traditional holidays. Think of any occasion to touch these people with your name.

**Press release.** A properly worded press release gets you free advertising in your local papers. Most papers are looking for content about events serving your community. Talk with your local paper about your Woman's Car Care Clinics or anything else that serves the community. This type of marketing is especially nice since you are not "advertising" to the customers.

**Informational marketing.** This can include newsletters, articles in the local paper, speaking to service groups, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, local high schools - anything that allows you to be seen and heard. Make sure when you are working with youth groups that you prepare some marketing for them to take home to their parents. Refrigerator magnets, pens, pencils, and calendars need to be given out at these events. In the past, we would put together a white plastic bag with our logo on the side, fill it with all types of goodies, and make sure everyone took one. This type of passive marketing was fairly inexpensive and it worked wonders for us.

So to recap Advertising and Marketing 101: There are three marketing programs. Have a plan for each and create a budget for each. If needed, hire the creativity. Be consistent. Do different things. Get out and meet people and businesses. Have a well-designed and optimized Web site. Be seen on the social networking sites. Be first in the organic search listing. Make an investment in your business with a good investment in marketing and advertising your business.

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