

# October Retail Tips



## Top Tips - Don't just advertise, market your business !

Most small business owners are just so busy working IN the business that when it's busy, we don't concentrate much on marketing and advertising. Now we're all pretty much agreed that this has been a strange year, maybe not for your particular shop, but for the market in general.

But with the signs showing that things are picking up its important not to slip back into old habits : So the question is : Do you have a marketing plan ?

Are you doing everything you know you could to market your business, or are you busy being busy ? Most of us are so busy, we have no idea what we're going to do next day, never mind in 2 months time. But a planned approach to marketing will make us think more clearly about what we should be doing and what we could be doing and how effective is the money we're spending !

For example, in adverts that you run, check the headlines, offers and messages are right for the market, for the time of the ad going to press, and more important that they will make your target market notice you and act on what they are seeing. Don't just run the same advert month after month.

Creating a marketing plan is your first step. You might need to conduct some market research to determine who your ideal client is, what their needs are, how you can meet their needs, where you can find them, how you will reach them, and the daily activities you need to do to keep your name out there. If you know the answers to these questions then you're ahead of the game (Assuming of course that you're realistic with your answers !).

Some promotional activities could include networking, speaking, advertising, direct mail, attending seminars, social networking, blogging, internet marketing and ezines. All of these are active forms of marketing that take your time, unless you can delegate some of the activities or automate them.

Here's a few suggestions to consider when you're working on your marketing plan :

Do at least one marketing activity each day.

Set specific marketing & money goals each year; review and adjust them accordingly.

Keep brainstorming new ideas; write them down and keep a file, review it when you're fresh out of ideas !

Always have marketing materials with you in your car - cards, flyers, brochures, postcards - you never know when you might be able to pass them out or put them on display!

Always include your company contact info (and possibly a business card or promotion piece) with any invoice, card, mailer or email.

Always follow up with each person you meet out networking within a week at most.

Develop a newsletter by mail or email to stay "on top of people's minds" so they will remember you - if you don't remind them about you, they WILL forget about you!

Track your results and see what's working, what you can tweak and resend and then what needs to go after giving it a minimum of 3 months or more depending on the activity.

Of course, some of these things can be outsourced, but that either costs money, or bribery of close friends and family - because these things do NEED to be done - whether you do it or someone else it doesn't matter so much. We are not all SuperHeroes and we can't do it all so don't try and take on too much !

Next, put a plan together on how to accomplish all of the things you want to do or change and what you have to do or delegate to get there - If you know you're an enthusiastic starter but then you get overwhelmed or distracted consider having someone else responsible for elements of what you do, so that you have to get stuff done on time - ie build in some safety nets so that you don't run out of steam !

You've done 90% of the work in promoting your business, you've got premises, stock, arranged in beautifully, served your customers well so that they're loyal to you, arranged your windows, so think about the promotion of your business as the final 10% of the race, its not the be all and end all, it's the icing on the cake that makes it tastier !!!

*Rachel*