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The Pedestal Group

Evaluating Marketing Options

Special points of interest:

- *Email Addresses*
- *Sales presentations*
- *Selling*
- *Networking*
- *Interns*
- *Business evals*
- *AND MORE!*

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There's a sales rep on the phone promising lots of new business if you just sign up for their fabulous new… whatever. And now you have to decide do you try it, or not?

In troubleshooting, it is always the goal to get the problem down to either one thing or another. But only having two choices. In marketing, your two choices are what type of problem do you solve for your customers. Do you solve those needs they have all the time and you have to motivate them to act on it, or do you solve those needs that come up and they have to remember you? That question is the single biggest key to your marketing plan.

If you solve problems that are always there, your marketing efforts need to be focused on motivating people to act. In these cases coupons, specials and big call's to action are vital. If someone can cut out your information and tape it to their computer monitor or put it on their refrigerator, you have a much better chance of them taking action. Things like advertisements in yearbooks or newspapers might get you some name recognition, but probably won't get you direct business.

If you solve problems that come up periodically but aren't always around, your challenge is to keep your name top of mind. If you think about your own life, how often have you had a situation come up, you got it taken care of and then remembered you wanted to try that new place or go with a different vendor because the last time didn't work so well? Your prospects and customers are having the same problem. It is vital to keep your name in front of them in helpful ways all the time. That way when the situation arises, they remember exactly who you are. In this case you will do more educational marketing like newsletters, blogs, white papers, email campaigns, etc.

There is a third type of marketing tool to gain "Name Awareness". Name awareness is just that—people are aware of who you are. Name awareness can benefit all types of business so they can definitely be a useful tool. But unless you have a very specific market, it is difficult to gain enough of a presence without

a large budget to make a difference. If you want to do a name awareness campaign, focus it on as small a group of people as possible. Then as that sphere gains knowledge, you can broaden it (because you should be reaping the benefits and have more money to put into the program).

Regardless of the marketing option, it is vital to know where your customers are looking. As you check in with your best customers from time to time, ask them what they read, what's important to them and what they need to know. That will help you attract people just like them!

Marketing options come in many varieties but being able to put them into categories can help you make decisions. And keep things according to your plan!

Compromised Email Addresses

Recent headlines have announced that online marketing company Epsilon had a data breach. Epsilon helps companies like Best Buy, Capital One, Chase, Citigroup, HSN, Target, Verizon and others manage their email marketing campaigns. While no confidential information was obtained, names, email addresses and shopping habits were obtained. So why do you care?

DATA BREACHES CAN LEAD TO MALICIOUS EMAILS APPEARING IN YOUR INBOX MORE OFTEN

If people have those kinds of facts about you, they have a much better chance at getting malicious emails by you as they will look more real. To protect yourself, keep the following in mind:

- Never send personal, confidential or financial information by email. Email is not a secure form of communication.
- If a company you trust asks for this type of information via email, go to their website and log into your account to see if they truly need it. Most sites have a message center to see if they truly need to contact you.
- If you receive an email indicating a problem that causes you concern, check with the company's website. Often malicious emails are designed to cause concern.
- Run your anti-virus and anti-spyware software update regularly.

Sales Presentations

LEADING WITH SOMETHING ENGAGING WILL HELP YOU LAND THE SALE!

Do you start your sales presentations with a history of your business? When you do, do people sit back in their chairs, get more comfortable and look down at their handouts? Instead, try a different approach and evaluate it through body language. How do you keep the people sitting forward, engaged and involved? NOTE: can be the exact same thing over the phone. Ever caught yourself sitting too close to your computer because you were involved in what was going on?

Lead with a success story—start by telling a story about a company you worked with that had similar challenges to your client and how you solved them.

Lead with questions—start by asking them important questions about their challenges that are specific to the challenge you are there to solve. Don't ask about revenues, employee matters, or issues that would be considered "personal".

Lead with what you know—start by walking through the information you have gathered on the problem or concern. Since it is all about them, they will find it more compelling.

Leading your presentation with something engaging will help you be more memorable, seen as more knowledgeable and help you land the sale. They can ask about your history over lunch!

Don't Sell Against Yourself

Have you ever walked into a client nervous about the negotiation? Everyone has. But the key is to end up with the best deal for both of you. For many entrepreneurs, they actually sell against themselves instead of getting the best deal for themselves as well.

First, don't go in with a discount that hasn't been requested. Why discount your services if they haven't even asked? Your pricing was set for what your service is worth, period.

Next, after making the presentation, don't keep talking. Be sure to give the other person time to process and then voice their opinion. If you keep talking, you will be making assumptions on how they feel or what they are thinking and most often will be wrong.

Finally, follow up. Sitting in your office thinking about all the things you said good and bad, worrying about what they are thinking, etc. will make you crazy. Instead, at the end of a presentation tell the prospect when you will follow up and then do so. And continue to set that time / date and do so until the person says no. Because until they say it, it isn't real!

Networking Tips

You walk into a room full of people at a networking event and need to start talking. That can be intimidating for anyone. But here are a few tips to make it easier:

Have a goal—before you arrive, set a goal for the number of new people you want to meet at that meeting. Having a number in mind helps you stay motivated to work the room. But don't set the number too high—4 good contacts in 3 hours is much better than 15 random business cards.

Determine a topic on which you want to gather opinions. If you are at a trade show, choose something one of the presenters said. If it is a local meeting, choose a local issue. Not a sports decision or something political but something that deals with business. Then, when you meet someone new you can ask for their opinion. Right off the bat you will seem more interesting because you ask good questions. At the end of the night you can then use that information with your clients, "I took a straw poll at the meeting and people were saying…".

Take notes. There is nothing more helpful than jotting a note or two on the back of a business card. When you get back to the office, you can quickly and easily follow up with the person because you have something specific to talk about instead of a generic "nice to meet you". You will get more follow ups from remembering them!

Unpaid Interns

We at TPG have now received emails from THREE sources about students just waiting for unpaid interns. If we have the work, they have the people. So with all these students trying to get a position, should you consider it?

With the financial risks low or non-existent, an unpaid interns can be a wonderful alternative to hiring. But be ready to compensate them through experience and training. Because without that, the experience is lost on both of you.

If you haven't received these emails, contact your local career center, any colleges in your area and your Chamber of Commerce. They often have lists of programs waiting for employers. And don't assume they know about you—many of these organizations struggle to figure out how to connect with employers.

Once you know what organization you are working with, have a plan for the intern. This will be more than your typical on-boarding plan because you have to make decisions based on the finite nature of the relationship.

The intern program will last 3 to 9 months typically so during that time will the intern need an email address or is there a "generic" office account to use? Do they need a computer, a phone, etc.?

Then, work backwards. At the end of the internship, what would you need to declare the program a success. Include what skills and knowledge you would like the intern to have. Consider how you want your internship to appear on this individual's resume when going out into the world to get a job. After all, if they stay in your industry, they may get a job with a potential client! Set your goals to be clear and achievable.

Now you are ready to set a schedule for those goals. If at the end of the project you want your database in tip top shape and a full understanding of 5 core values of your clients, how many calls will the intern make each day (keeping in mind a ramp up period at the beginning as they learn how to make the calls, etc.)? What else will they do when they are not working on their key goals?

SET GOALS FOR THE INTERN AND WORK BACKWARDS TO CREATE YOUR SCHEDULE

Build into your schedule time spent with the intern. The best business training will come from the people the intern gets to interact with. Contact vendors and partners to see if they could offer something for the intern. It is amazing what people will do when given a specific situation and asked for a short amount of time.

At the end of the experience the intern needs to be able to have job experience to reference for future employment. You need to be able to have the work picked up by someone else if it is an on-going project or fully documented so you know what happened and why when it is over. But, often internships turn into employment situations when the company realizes how valuable the intern is and projects are completed that no one else thought could be done. Interns can be a great alternative to hiring full time.

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

Quotes to Evaluate Business

Anita Campbell over at Small Business Trends approached a recent Inc. Magazine meeting in a unique and fun way. She looked for quotes to use to evaluate your business. http://smallbiztrends.com/2011/04/entrepreneurial-quotes-business.html

Thinking on these key areas can really help you manage your business!

First up was Josh Linkner, the founder of ePrize. He said, "Instead of being 'heads down' we should be 'heads up' so we can spot trends" Great reminder to look at the big picture periodically.

Duane Jebbett, CEO of Rowmark said "I have no good ideas. I 'steal' them from my staff." Clearly he doesn't just "steal" ideas, but runs a culture allowing people to give ideas freely.

Shar VanBoskirk of Forester Research recommends, "Get comfortable marketing on the Splinternet." The splinternet is a great description of how everyone has their own ways and channels of getting information and your message has to be more places than ever.

"Technology has enabled small companies to do amazing things," was the quote from Phil Simon, author of The New Small.

Bo Burlingham, author of Small Giants: Companies That Choose To Be Great Instead of Big said, "When a business has mojo you want to be associated with it." How do you show off your mojo?

Keith Ferrazzi, author of Never Eat Alone said, "Stop trying to get people to like you – instead care about THEM." TPG Comment WOW.

Dan Heath, co-author of Switch said, "Resistance to change is often just a lack of clarity. Ambiguity is the enemy of change. "

There were others, but these were the ones we found compelling. A great way to look at your business in a new light!

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