

# TIME TO BLOSSOM

In order for your business to grow, you need to attract new customers. So think like a prize-winning bloom: stand out from the competition, appeal to the emotions and offer an irresistible benefit. Here's how to get more people on to your scent

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## MARKET YOUR WAY TO GROWTH

To gain new business you need a coherent marketing plan. And in today's multi-channel environment, an integrated marketing campaign works best to target potential customers successfully.

'A catchy mailshot, an attractive website, a great ad... each one has an effect,' explains Elke Bretz of Oxfordshire-based consultancy Simplicity in Marketing, 'but when combined to complement and reinforce the same message, they have a far more significant impact. It's a formula that works for small and large companies.'

### Reach out and touch

With any marketing, you need to plan what your objectives are, decide the type of potential customers you want to target and find the most appropriate ways to reach them. Then make sure you communicate in a way that is relevant and meaningful.

Mailshots have a strong role in providing a personal, compelling message delivered directly to the recipients. They can engage customers emotionally and offer tangible prompts for recipients to act. In an integrated campaign they can help advertisers clarify a message perhaps only partially picked up from a press ad, or communicate with people that the press advert did not reach. Mailshots and email can also complement each other - 70% of people say they are more likely to respond to or remember something if it is communicated both by post and email\*.

So how do you find potential customers to communicate with? You can buy specialist data lists which match the type of customers you already have. Or you can collect your own addresses. Put a sign-up

option on your website and highlight the benefits of customers receiving communication from you. Do a competition on your website, packaging or in a local newspaper - there's nothing like the chance of winning a prize to convince customers to part with their details! 'Send to a friend' links or 'recommend a friend' cards sent to existing customers work, too.

It must be clear to people what you are intending to use their data for, plus they must have the option to say whether or not you can use the data for those purposes. See this as a positive - if someone is happy to receive your mailing they will be more receptive to it.

### Into cyberspace

Beyond mailshots, email and press ads, you now have all of cyberspace at your disposal. A truly multi-channel campaign might also make use of social networking sites, websites, posters, sponsorship and partnership channels to extend your message to the most appropriate audience. And of course, mailshots are ideal to drive customers to your website.

An ingenious example of a recent integrated campaign was a competition launched by Doritos, which targeted students via mailshots, challenging them to devise a new ad. They had to upload their video to the Doritos website where, the more hits it got, the closer the creator came to a £20,000 prize. The winner's ad was used in an above-the-line campaign.

The reach of social networking sites should not be underestimated too, asserts Bretz. 'You can target the UK's 3.5 million users of Facebook - the second most-trafficked social media site in the

world - by setting up a "group" for your business, which your "fans" or clients join and which gets your business a mention on their profile pages.'

Whatever mix of channels you use, ensure you can measure the results of your campaign. Track where customers found out about you, so you can measure how effectively each element is working.

**• If you do one thing:** Understand who your potential customer is so you can communicate in a relevant way.

### • Case study: LOCAL IT HEROES

Neil Farrimond and his two partners started iOpening, an IT training agency, last year. They approached Simplicity in Marketing for help in building an integrated marketing plan on the theme of 'understanding technology'. iOpening decided to offer free IT workshops at parish councils and village halls in an effort to reach their target market of homes and small businesses, and advertised the workshops via mailshots, flyers and local press ads. 'For each workshop venue, we mailed about 180 contacts in the local areas,' says Farrimond. 'The data was derived from various sources, mainly from previous contacts and opt-ins from our podcasts and contact forms. In terms of results we managed to meet our target attendee numbers per workshop and managed to generate business for relatively little outlay.' The company currently runs monthly email and mailshot campaigns, as well as producing podcasts on iTunes.



### GROWTH THROUGH CREATIVITY

The biggest challenge, when you're a small business, is to make yourself stand out from the crowd. Creative marketing expert Karen Lambert urges resisting the temptation to clutter your material with information but says, 'make an emotional connection with customers and address them in a refreshing, straightforward way.' Simply experimenting with your marketing material is a good starting point. Lambert's agency, Blackpool-based Happy Creative, has unusual round business cards.

An example of a creative design that really gets the message across was created by workers' cooperative Suma, a wholesale distributor of natural products. For a mailer targeting wholefood stores, they came up with a 'till receipt' design, which challenged the recipient to think about what they're paying for organic and natural products. They sent out around 34,000 mailers between May and July 2008. So far they have received 100 catalogue requests and set up several new accounts. It was also sent by Royal Mail's Carbon Neutral Door to Door scheme which emphasised Suma's ethical credentials.

#### Think differently

Whether it's a Facebook page, a mailshot, flyer or an email newsletter, think about how the words and images combine to reflect your company's brand, encourage customers to respond to you and make you stand out.

Above all, says Lambert, breaking industry norms gets your head above the rest. 'One of my clients is a builder who leaves wine, flowers, and a recommend-a-friend card when he's finished a job. It sounds simple,' she says, 'but in that industry it stands out as being different.'

✦ **If you do one thing:** Push your boundaries. Doing something different gets you noticed.

#### Case study FISHING FOR BUSINESS

One of Happy Creative's clients is Aqualease Aquariums, which provides aquariums and maintenance for workplaces throughout the north west of England. They wanted an effective way of attracting new clients. Happy Creative designed a pop-up mailing to really get them noticed. 'It arrives flat but opens to reveal little cubes with fish on them that jump out at you,' explains Lambert. They used a very carefully chosen list of businesses who were likely to be interested in their service. 'The mailing targeted 100 prospects and the company won 10 new customers, a 10% success rate. We also recommended Aqualease do a follow-up call to recipients after the mailshot had landed, which also helped response,' says Lambert.

●● **Resist the temptation to clutter your marketing material with information. Instead make an emotional connection with customers**

#### COST-EFFECTIVE WAYS TO GROW

'There are ways to attract customers for little or no cost,' says George Derbyshire, chief executive of the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies (NFEA), which offers advice to small businesses.

#### Free publicity

Ensure you keep your existing customers happy, so they make repeat orders and recommend you to their friends and colleagues. The great thing about this type of word of mouth marketing is it's free.

Sending a press release to your local newspaper costs nothing. Offer yourself as an expert in your field, to a paper, or offer a prize for a competition in return for some coverage. 'Local papers need local news,' says Derbyshire, 'so get involved in activities in your area to reach people. Plus you'll engender a positive vibe about your business.'

Consider ways of driving traffic to your

website such as setting up an ad for your company on Google AdWords. 'When people search on Google using a keyword you have selected,' explains Derbyshire, 'your ad may appear next to the search results. You only pay for the traffic that clicks through so it's cost-effective too.'

You can also produce your own mailshot or sales letters at a very affordable cost (see page 4 for details of Royal Mail's new Mailshots Online tool).

Don't forget the simple things like Yellow Pages or Yell.com, which has a free package as well as a paid-for service. Networking organisations such as LinkedIn or Ecademy are exploding, so exploit them (see page 7 for tips). Sound Wave Marketing, a King's Lynn business-to-business company, gets one good referral every three weeks by using the business network, BNI.

✦ **If you do one thing:** Encourage your customers to make a referral to others.

#### Case study: DRIVING CUSTOM

When it comes to marketing her taxi company in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, Sarah Miller has used cost-effective ways to encourage customers to recommend her to others. Lady Penelope and Vine Premier Travel is a lady drivers-only service. Every customer who makes a booking is mailed a pack with a business card with details of services, a fridge magnet with the company's logo, a 10% off voucher and an offer to receive £5 off if they recommend a friend who spends more than £50. 'It has raised the profile of the company, increased repeat bookings and encouraged word-of-mouth,' says Miller. She also commissioned special Christmas cards featuring her taxis and send them to all her customers. She's combined this with writing to her local paper, which resulted in her an article, and getting coverage on BBC Radio Norfolk when she raised money for Children in Need.

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