



# 3 Most Common Marketing Mistakes Made by Entrepreneurs *(and How to Avoid Them)*

By Terri Fry Brukhartz, CPCC



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In my years of coaching, I've noticed that many entrepreneurs expect their businesses to grow through referrals. After all, you're really good at what you do. It only makes sense that your business will grow through word-of-mouth.

While this is a legitimate and wonderful means of growth, it's a rare business that's able to support itself solely on referrals. Even big brands don't rely on word-of-mouth to grow their businesses. They advertise, sponsor events, and do all sorts of things to market themselves.

There are so many marketing activities to choose from and only a limited amount of time and money to do them. Plus, how do you know which ones will work best for you?

When you realize you're going to have to sell your product or service, and that you can't survive on referrals alone, it's not uncommon to feel:

- ⤴ Overwhelmed by the sheer number of marketing tools available—advertising, flyers, networking, etc.
- ⤴ Unclear about which marketing activity will bring you the most money with the least amount of effort
- ⤴ Frustrated by the lack of return on your choices—why didn't that beautiful ad bring me any customers?

You can avoid some of the above by learning the three most common marketing mistakes small business owners make and how to avoid them.

## Mistake #1: Taking the Shot Gun Approach

Taking the shot gun approach is when you spend a few of your marketing dollars here, and a few there without any real plan in mind.

Hit and miss just doesn't work. **One of the most important things to know about marketing is that everything you do should have the same goal.**

I worked in a very large advertising agency on a national brand. Their advertising goal was not to increase sales per se - although that was certainly the end result. Their advertising objective was to gain greater awareness of their product among their potential customers.

Most advertising is based on the premise that if your ads reach the same person over and over again, they'll be more likely to remember you the next time they need your product. Bottom line? The big boys advertise to make their product top-of-mind with their potential customer.

You can and should do the same thing. Put together a marketing plan designed to reach your potential client as many times as possible.

“But,” you say to yourself, “I don't have the marketing dollars to just create awareness of my business. That's ludicrous. I'll go under if I don't bring in some new business and bring it in fast.”

Don't worry. **You can market your business where your target market is most likely to see your advertising message. It doesn't have to cost a lot or even any money.**

You can use social media to drive people to your website, speak to large or small groups, post flyers, etc. None of these marketing ideas has a monetary cost associated with it, except for the cost of ink & paper for printing flyers on your home printer!

I've helped many business owners create and execute well-targeted, inexpensive marketing plans. It is possible to do. And it can be extremely effective.

## **Mistake #2: Marketing Your Business Through Traditional Sales Calls Without Other Marketing Tools**

The next marketing mistake to avoid is to think that marketing consists of either sales calls or traditional advertising. Period. These are both legitimate and worthy marketing tools, but not solely required in order to have a successful business.

You think that you have to run ads or make sales calls, but you don't have the money for much advertising and you absolutely hate the idea of selling.

What else can you do? Have you considered any of these low-cost ideas?

- ⤴ Run one ad in a special section of the paper which targets your ideal client
- ⤴ Attend your local Chamber of Commerce events where you'll meet other small business owners who may be able to use your product/service or know someone who can
- ⤴ If you're targeting a specialized market such as accountants, attend as many of their professional events as possible
- ⤴ Speak to a group on a topic of value related to your business
- ⤴ Run a workshop
- ⤴ Post flyers and/or brochures where potential clients are most likely to hang out
- ⤴ Tweet, blog, Pin, etc.

If you're too uncomfortable making sales calls on people you don't know, then try:

- ⤴ Taking a prospective client out for coffee. Don't sell them. Talk about what they do. Ask questions. Don't be surprised if they ask about what you do, too. Explain how your product/service could be of value to them based on what you learned in your conversation.
- ⤴ Follow up on anyone referred to you. You don't have to wait for them to call. You'll be surprised how many people will be happy you took care of making the call for them.
- ⤴ Put together a joint venture with another business owner. Let's say a non-profit organization is putting together a running event. If you're a massage therapist, offer to set up a massage chair for a free massage for participants. Hand out coupons to the attendees after their massage.

Don't make the mistake of thinking you can only do traditional advertising or make sales calls to total strangers. You can still be effective without either.

## **Mistake #3: Refusing to Go to Any Networking Events**

Some people feel right at home attending a networking event and passing out cards to people they don't know. I have never been a fan of that. In fact, I hate doing it. And so do many of my clients.

I advise my event-network-hating clients to do the following:

- ⤴ Attend a few events that at least have a speaker you'll find interesting. There will be more to talk about with other attendees and you'll have enjoyed yourself regardless of the outcome.
- ⤴ Look at networking as a means of creating awareness. If you get business out of it, great! If not, then at least you'll be known when your product/service is needed.
- ⤴ Network but don't network through events a lot. Invite people who might be good referral sources to lunch. Do it on more than one occasion. Let them get to know you. And remember, don't do all the talking. It's important to get to know them and support their business as well.

The three most frequent marketing mistakes made by small business owners can be avoided! The biggest key is to make sure you have appropriate marketing goals, know what to focus on to get the best return for your time or money, and choose marketing activities that you not only like doing, but will also provide the most success.

If you want to get some help figuring out what marketing activities you should avoid AND which ones will bring you the most success, please feel free to email me at [terri@coachterri.com](mailto:terri@coachterri.com) or call me directly at 708-386-0500. I'd love to help.

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