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We Mean **Business.**

The Top Ten Marketing Tips **for Small Business Owners**

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PROSBO helps small business owners succeed by providing affordable and effective business marketing and management solutions that generate measurable results.

The following is a no-nonsense introductory guide for helping **small business owners** effectively market their businesses that has been offered by PROSBO, a company dedicated to helping small business owners succeed.

1. Always Keep the "4 Cs of Marketing" in the forefront of your mind when you are considering anything that touches on effectively marketing or managing your small business.

- **Consumer Confidence**
- **Client Convenience**
- **Customer Choices**
- **Constant Communication**

These four simple things will almost always be the unseen guide that leads consumers to action when it comes to the purchase of a product or service. They forge a powerful, yet usually subconscious criteria that greatly influences the buying decisions of American consumers. Anything that you can do that will increase and/or improve any of the "4 Cs of Marketing" will reward you with more business.

2. Embrace this truth: being good at what you do is not good enough.

I am convinced that the vast majority of individuals that decide to go into business for themselves have properly evaluated their skills as they directly relate to the business that they are entering, and that they rightly consider themselves to be professionals and even experts in their chosen vocation.

However, most of these professionals and even experts will fail. Why? Because being good at what you do is not good enough. Being a professional in your field is not adequate. Even being an expert in your industry will lead you to failure.

Marketing is Everything.

You can have the best product or service at a great price and fall flat on your face with it, because your product or service will not market itself. Your industry excellence needs to have a marketing companion equal to itself. An inferior product or service can build a

solid company if it has been aggressively marketed with success. A superior product or service can die on the vine because it has not been liberally watered with good marketing. Small businesses that fail are usually undercapitalized, and to make matters worse, the struggling small business owner pinches pennies in the very area where they MUST spend money. **Marketing.**

Never Stop Marketing.

Growing businesses never stop marketing. You might think — and it you did, you would be wrong — that you can stop marketing once you “succeed”. It is simply not true. You must continue to market to retain your current clientele and expand your market share. No matter what business you are in, there will be some attrition. If you hope to maintain any level of security, you must have a plan for some quantified, steady growth. You will need to replace your losses with new gains.

3. Nail down your company’s mission.

It is not just important, but it is vital that your company have a focus. Your company has a purpose for existence. Decide that purpose and get it in print. This printed focus is generally referred to as a “Mission Statement.” Your mission will determine how you do business and will also help to identify your market. It will be worth the effort, time and expense to clarify and document your company’s mission statement.

This is an area where probably most small business owners need some outside help. You don’t necessarily have to hire a professional business consultant. You may have people with business minds in your own circle of friends that could assist in the process of creating a mission statement. If you know a successful business person, offer to buy them lunch and ask them to talk over your mission statement with you.

The addition of some special ingredient that would set you apart from competitors in your field will prove to make your company’s mission more powerful. Print this one-sentence statement on a plaque and keep it in front of you, and post it on every other piece of marketing literature that you distribute. (Business cards, brochures, rack cards, direct mail....)

4. Create your unique, visual (graphic) company identity.

If you have not already done so, create a solid brand identity. This is often referred to as a “corporate identity” or more commonly a “logo.” We don’t advise that you do this yourself, unless you are truly a professional graphic artist. — and don’t begin working on your logo until you have your mission statement hammered out and in print.

Ask for references and hire a professional to do this for you. Insist that your logo be developed in a VECTORS program like Adobe Illustrator or Corel Draw. A vector file is comprised of “lines and fills” as opposed to bitmap type files, and the result is complete scalability without loss of resolution.

A logo created in a vectors based program can be scaled down to print on a pin-head or be enlarged enough to read on the moon (from earth) and still be crystal-clear. Bitmap programs will not afford that same scalability. You can always export a vectors file as a bitmap, but you CANNOT go the other way. Demand a vectors file for your logo. You

will be glad you did.

Once you have completed the logo creation process, print this icon on every piece of literature that you have. Any time your business is represented in any type of print media, whether electronic or paper, have this logo present. Stick with it and be very careful about changing it.

5. Learn the proper use of business cards.

You can get great looking, high quality business cards today without spending a lot of money, and you can get lots of them. Don't even think about printing out cheap business cards from perforated paper or off of your own printer.

Distribute **ONLY first quality** business cards and lots of them. Always have them with you and hand them out in multiples. They are cheap marketing. Ask your friends to take a few and pass them out for you. Business cards are most business owner's main piece of marketing and usually the first thing distributed. Don't pinch pennies (and it would certainly be only pennies in this day) regarding your business cards.

Don't risk the subliminal suggestion that your company is so desperate that you are even printing your own cheap business cards. This demonstrates that you have a problem with identifying the importance of your time as well. *If you can't afford to get good business cards printed, hang it up and get a job.*

6. Get your vehicle lettered.

Don't overlook this branding opportunity. You'll search far and wide **and IN VAIN** to find anything that will go as far for advertising.

You will need to check with your city codes regarding this matter. In recent years, it seems that municipalities (especially rural) have started a war over signage. Be sure to check first to ensure that you are compliant with city codes. Most cities will allow at least one vehicle to be parked in a residential neighborhood that has company signage on it. (If yours does not, then magnetic signs may be a good option—they are easily removed)

"Branding" your company can be expensive. Advertising in different media so people see your company represented in different printed media reinforces consumer confidence in your company. This "consumer confidence" is the single most important element that influences purchase decisions. Put consumer confidence into your stock pot and you will render it down to this one word: **TRUST**.

Trust takes time. Visual and audio marketing stamps multiple impressions on the mind that help to engender trust in your brand. *Your automobile is your own, personal, business traveling billboard.* **Use it!**

7. Develop your own business referral network.

Find people in companion businesses that are not in direct competition with you and trade referrals with them. You will be doing yourself and your clients a service. These friends in business are often called "power partners". Find and attend a professional

referrals networking group or club and learn how to provide good, qualified leads to one another. *Meet with your Power Partners regularly.* (Weekly is best) You can become a collectively powerful sales force for one another.

8. Keep a presence in the Yellow Pages.

The popular, printed yellow pages is still the “#1 go to” for lots of people. You need to be represented there. A large ad is not necessary, but a presence is a must.

9. Maintain an up-to-date website.

Should you have a website for your business? **YES.** No business in our day should be without a properly developed and marketed website and *an ugly or out of date website is worse than no website at all.*

Businesses that do not have an effective website presence today will be perceived as less professional and either unwilling or unable to keep up with the times, and those perceptions (whether true or not) will often send the would-be buyer packing off to another business. ***Having a website demonstrates that your business is both progressive and permanent.*** Buyers are becoming more sophisticated and you are presently losing potential customers if you are not providing a website for them.

10. Answer your telephone!

All of the marketing in the world is of no avail when your phone goes unanswered. The goal of marketing is to generate that call that indicates interest. When you do not answer the phone, you have probably lost that client. Unless they are a current client (and then not always) they most often will NOT leave a message. They will call the next business in line. *Inconveniencing a consumer is an unpardonable sin. They won't forgive it.*

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Anything that you do that increases consumer confidence, provides added client conveniences, expands to offer more customer choices, or improves your contact with your clients will provide the necessary collateral for successful marketing, and will increase the closure rate of new prospects.

— Douglas E. Nevill

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