



5 Marketing Mistakes You Can't Afford to Make

By Debbie Allen

In virtually every area of business, there will be pitfalls along the way. Marketing is no exception. Time and time again, businesses of all sizes make the same costly mistakes. But knowing how to avoid these mistakes can save you energy, disappointment – and money.

Mistake #1: Eliminating marketing efforts when times get tight.

When cash flow slows, advertising, direct mail and other forms of marketing are the easiest expenses to reduce, right? But cut these, and you eliminate the very activities that will bring in new customers to turn your business around. This is the time when you may be spending more time analyzing the results of your marketing efforts. But by stopping marketing efforts, you will be setting yourself up for additional loss of business.

Mistake #2: Not measuring results.

Don't wait until times get tight to start measuring the results of your marketing efforts. By analyzing regularly, you will be able to reinvest in what is working, and drop what isn't. Ask customers how they found your business, and then track the results. Use in-store or on-line coupons. Or host a focus group of a variety of customers to discover what attracts them to your business.

Mistake #3: Putting all your marketing dollars in one area.

If your entire marketing budget is used on just one method of promoting your business, you won't realize the highest return on your investment. Diversifying your efforts will increase the frequency and reach of your messages and stretch your marketing dollars.

Businesses can get hooked into one large advertising program with a local newspaper, magazine or radio station, and put the majority of their marketing dollars there. They feel as if they have to advertise with the same media source, just because they always have or because fear they will lose ground since their competitors are advertising there as well. Some business owners actually stay with a company for fear of upsetting their sales associate.

Remember, it's your money and your investment. Don't ever let anyone talk you into an advertising program that is not producing the best results for your business. And measure the results of your advertising dollars spent vs. the income received from your advertising on a consist basis.

When you diversify, don't' forget about direct marketing. Many business owners only do a few direct-mail programs a year, targeted to their existing customer base. They need to do more.

Your customer base and mailing list is gold, make sure you have budgeted a large part of your marketing dollars to advertise to your existing customers. They already love you, so keep them coming in by sending a direct mail piece to them at least six times a year.

Mistake #4: Allowing your ego to get in the way of common sense.

Ego can tempt a very bright person to do dumb things. Your marketing decisions should be based on factors that will positively impact some area of your business – usually the bottom line. Buying full-page ads or covers featuring yourself and not focusing on your business' unique offerings may result in money going out the window.

Mistake #5: Not getting help when you need it.

If you find you're too busy to handle your marketing efforts or that your materials aren't looking as professional as they should, it's time to call in the reinforcements. Hire a full-or part-time employee to allow you more free time to work on the "business end" or hire an independent business consultant to bring in new concepts and fresh ideas.

About the Author

Debbie Allen, The Expert of Experts, is one of the world's leading authorities on business and brand strategy. She is the author of seven books including her latest best-seller *The Highly Paid Expert*. Learn more about her "Expert Positioning Formula" and innovative marketing strategies at www.DebbieAllen.com.

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