

# Marketing - A Simple Overview

Frequently perceived as expensive (it isn't if you're getting value for money) and, as always, not as complex as some may have you believe. To help you get to grips with some of the basic principles, here's a simple overview of some of the types of opportunities that are available to you.

## Before you start thinking about your marketing, research is a must

Understand 'who' your product (or service) is aimed at. 'Where' might you be able to reach that market place? This of course should be researched and understood before you even start trading. For some products it will be essential to know 'when' the customers might buy. (Christmas decorations tend to sell better to the public in November and December, although if you are selling Christmas promotion products to retailers you'll need to be ready to go in June!) Once you have the who, when and where you can start thinking about 'how' you are going to find new customers.

## Branding - so important.

Often completely overlooked by small businesses. Think about the successful companies you know and you'll picture their corporate image in your mind. Where would Boots be without their distinctive lettering? TOYS'R'US without the back to front 'R'. In today's visually stimulated world your branding image is so important. Don't be tempted into thinking a branding can be the do-it-yourself computer generated art library stuff either, it should be a professionally produced branding image, it is the only starting place for any serious business person. And, of course, the total stationery package must reflect the branding throughout: letterheads; compliment slips; business cards; invoices; statements; faxes; envelopes as well as the delivery van; premises; shop front; web site, packaging, etc.

## Advertising - only one option?

Everyone's first thought "shall I put an ad in the paper?". Generally the answer to that is "No!". Although there is a place for ads in publications, it's not for everyone. Consider how many times you have bought in response to an ad in a publication - what sort of purchase was it, what type of publication? Are your potential customers really likely to purchase your product through the local paper. Few will, but most won't, especially at start up. Think about alternatives.

## Printing - another option

Whatever you decide to have printed, what the print says, how it says it, what the layout looks like are all far more important than the average printer would have you believe. That's why you need a marketing professional.

## Leaflets - so many options

A5? A4? DL? Full colour? Black and white? Double sided? Folded? So many options - each have merit. Then how are you going to get them to your potential customers? Door-to-door delivery may be an answer for you. Not necessarily door-to-door in every street, but selective houses in certain streets, maybe certain businesses in particular business estates - it depends on your specific product or service. Computer repair companies, for example - could deliver a leaflet every house! Plan carefully, it might not be that everyone is a potential customer for your business - don't waste your precious resources.

## Posters - often under estimated.

Carefully placed, well designed posters can produce good results for the right kind of business. Training companies in the job centre, the local libraries, possibly at the local Post Office, where would your customers see one?

## Brochures - an all singing, all dancing option.

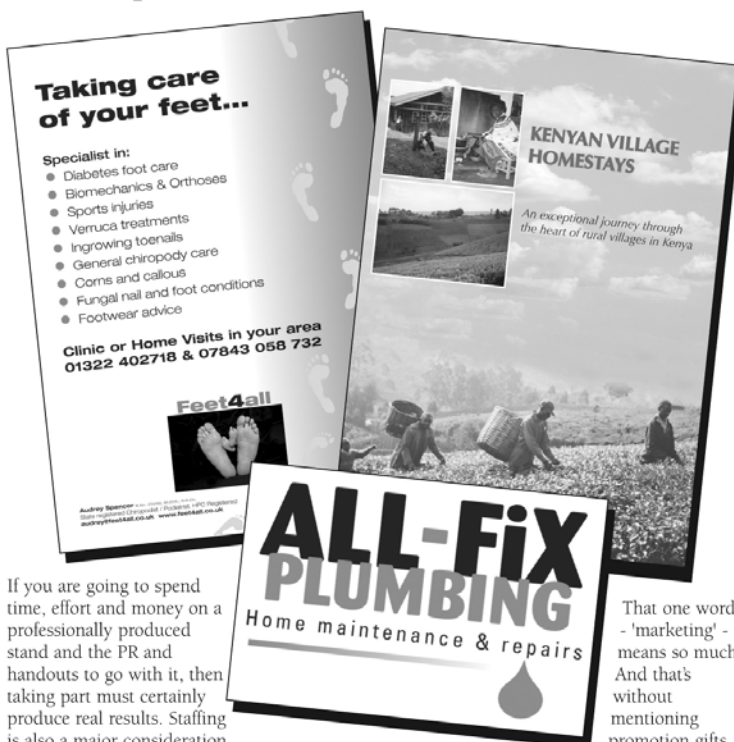
An alternative, of course, is a booklet or fold out leaflet. Since these can often be expensive to design and print they need to be put together professionally, not by a local printer, but by a professional designer or marketer. Someone who will spend the time understanding your product and your potential customers (certainly not a neighbour's son or daughter who is just at art school or someone who likes doing things on a computer)! A professional with the experience to ask you the right questions who will find the right answers for you. The main thing about such printed matter is that it must end up in your potential customers hands. Getting it there needs careful thinking and planning.

## Folders - a useful tool if you know how to use it.

Folders are ideal if you want to select the individual sheets of information being sent to particular customers. For some companies, sending the full range of their products out to every enquiry is wasteful. Selecting general information to go on the cover of the folder and then using inserts to show particular groups or specific products, means you send the right information to the right potential customer, without bombarding him with information that has no relevance for him. You could put your introductory letter at the front of the contents.

## Exhibitions - face to face with potential customers.

This might seem quite obvious, but, think carefully about the audience that the exhibition organisers are advertising to and check that those visitors are going to include a big proportion of your potential customers. If not, don't be an exhibitor.



If you are going to spend time, effort and money on a professionally produced stand and the PR and handouts to go with it, then taking part must certainly produce real results. Staffing is also a major consideration.

Running an exhibition stand on your own is virtually impossible. The natural breaks you need to take will mean you undoubtedly lose some contact. Some of your staff may feel it is a job they would be unhappy to do. Hiring promotion staff is an option. Whatever you decide make sure all enquiries are followed through. Exhibitions can also test the mechanics of your response. Plan carefully. Follow through every enquiry.

## PR - often undervalued, often underused.

Always misunderstood by small business. As with other elements of promotion, when produced professionally and used correctly Public Relations can be very successful. Generally PR means how the press are handled. Sending out press releases with no structure or real story frequently does no more than upset and annoy the local editor and his team. But creating a news story of reader value may get an excellent response towards your company and your products.

## A little thought goes a long way.

There are many other opportunities PR can offer. PR can also bring new sheets as an excellent addition to other advertising methods. Even regular magazines for the bigger companies.

## www - The potential is out there

If you use the web then 'KISS' is more relevant here than anywhere else- Keep It Simple Stupid! The World Wide Web has now developed into a serious alternative, whilst some companies trade solely on the web others may never need it, but a presence is becoming essential.

advertising, vouchers, incentives, networking, corporate clothing....

Mix & match is the way most businesses deal with their marketing. To a certain extent each one has merits enough for you to be involved at some level. But research is your key to success, the more you know, the better your new business could be. Understand the things listed here before you even consider trading, follow a logical path, make a plan, INVEST in that plan and your new business could turn more profit quicker than just bumbling along bumping into all these ideas without direction.



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