

## Build your marketing plan by creating awareness

The ideal promotion plan is one that results in clear steps you can put into action immediately. This means concentrating on just the practical, promotional aspects that will lead to results. The good news is that you can do it yourself.

### Identify your targets

Identify the exact types of customers you want to sell to over the next year. These could be your existing or new customers. For example, if you work as a labourer, your targets for next year might be:

- Existing customers who have spent over \$1,000 on your trade skills.
- Certain types of customers you currently sell to, with the aim of targeting a similar type of customer in a different town or city.
- Groups of people or types of businesses interested in what you sell.

Your focus here is on establishing (as precisely as possible) the targets you're going to spend most of your promotional efforts on in the coming year.

Remember, it's always easier to sell more to your existing customers than to people who have never bought from you before.

If you have trouble identifying targets, then working through a SWOT analysis of your business (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) will help you to focus on the marketing areas where you're most likely to reap benefits.

### Work out your objectives

List what you want to achieve for each of the targets you've identified. The idea is to be as brief as possible, and to quantify (make measurable) as much as possible.

For instance, if you look at the target of existing customers who spend more than \$1,000 with you each year, then an objective of 'keeping them happy and getting them to spend more' is not much use because it's too vague.

It's much better to state your objective as 'to assess customer satisfaction of all customers who spend over \$1,000 each year, and on average get them to increase their yearly spend by 30%.'

Keep your objective short, and keep it measurable. This way you can evaluate whether your promotional plan is working or not. Did you get an extra 30% from these customers or not?

You can easily monitor this by adding up the total sales from these targeted customers and then checking if there's been a 30% increase in revenue at year-end.

## Come up with some tactics

Write down what you're actually going to do to promote to each target. Using the above example, your objective has two parts:

1. Assess customer satisfaction.
2. Increase target customer sales by 30%.

Now you need to think of exactly how you can achieve this.

### Assessing customer satisfaction

The easiest way to achieve this might be to send out a brief survey to all your important customers.

Contact your target customers, either by email or ordinary mail. To encourage feedback, offer the chance to win a prize (maybe some free hours work when they next need your services) to everyone who replies.

### Increase target sales by 30%

You could try contacting each of these customers with updates of new products or services that you offer. If they're one-off customers, attempt to use them for referrals.

You could also conduct a special sales evening by invitation only for existing customers but invite them to bring a friend. Offer extra special deals, along with your normal services.

### Implement your tactics

Now decide who is going to action all the tactics you've developed. Next to each of your ideas write down the person responsible for carrying out each task.

For example:

- Survey existing customers. Design a survey and collate results (staff member).
- Organise direct mail of sales or special deals (me).
- Organise and train for complementary selling (me).

### Develop a timeline

Without deadlines, little gets done. So next you should develop a simple timeline, which lays out all your ideas throughout the year.

Now you have a guideline for when items must be completed. Use this as a budget, to see if your initial cost estimates were correct.

### Work out a budget

How much will your promotional plan cost? Add up all the columns from your timeline to find out. Weigh up your objectives against the costs.

It's important at this point to look back at your objectives and ask yourself if a 30% increase in sales from your existing customers will generate more than your budget costs?

### Evaluate your results

Now you need to find out if your plan is working. For example, was contacting your existing customers by email or direct mail effective?

All sales that relate to your efforts need to be calculated. You'll want to be able to assess how many sales you generated from any special sales events and count the number of replies from any email or direct mail campaigns.