

# TEN KEYS TO MARKETING SUCCESS

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Marketing success can be seen in many forms, resulting from both planned and unplanned exercises. Longer-term success in marketing initiatives, however, requires a steadfast, managed approach to maintain a desired level of achievement.

Here are ten must do exercises to provide the best means of success in your marketing efforts.

- **Always strive for GREAT customer service.**

No matter what you sell, the customer service you provide will largely determine whether or not your customers will return to buy again. For it is the service or lack of service that you will be remembered by, and that is what many customers will tell their friends and associates about.

- **Think and plan strategically.**

Time is a precious commodity that you cannot afford to waste through ineffective planning. Your objectives, goals and action plans need be well thought out, documented and prioritized for maximum benefit to your marketing efforts. Further, this process must be ongoing and adjusted as necessary, in keeping with your needs and changing market conditions.

- **Seek, build and maintain meaningful relationships.**

Few businesses can succeed in a virtual vacuum, as relationships in the marketplace are essential to business development and success.

Finding the best relationships for your business will require a dedicated effort, followed by a continuous building process to make them meaningful and lasting. Networking and partnering cannot succeed without a continuous proactive approach.

- **Build and maintain a customer file.**

A prospect file is a common fixture in sales programs, providing a link to potential business. However, once a prospect becomes a customer through purchase, the file entry must become that of a customer, where every future contact is logged. This provides the necessary contact trail that your staff needs to build upon. A satisfied customer represents a greater opportunity to future business than a handful of prospects.

- **Be an order finder first; an order taker second.**

A successful organization is one that has a built-in business development program. One that actively seeks new business contacts, and further contacts from them. These businesses operate on the premise that opportunities must be found, rather than waiting for the door to open or the phone to ring. If you are waiting for the sale, someone else is already working on it.

- **Never stop learning.**

No one who hopes to achieve and remain successful in business can afford to become complacent. Constant changes in technology and the market dictate the need for a continuous learning process for management and staff.

Competitive pressures and customer needs cannot be solved without acquiring new knowledge every day.

- **Never stop training.**

Just as management must continually learn, so too must all company staff.

Newly acquired knowledge must be passed on throughout the organization by means of a structured, dedicated process in a timely manner. On going staff development also provides an opportunity and incentive to retain good employees.

- **Create value added: become a resource.**

No business can be all things to all people, but many customers have other needs. In providing GREAT customer service, requests will be welcomed for good sources to meet other needs. Building a good business resource referral network can pay dividends to you and your customers. You are extending customer service beyond your walls while cultivating your own referral farm system.

- **Differentiate: separate yourself from the pack.**

Competitors may come and go, but there always will be a need to fine-tune your market appeal so that potential customers are attracted to your business. Customer service, convenience, post purchase support, value, reliability, appearance and price are only a sampling of the many ways your business can stand out from your competitors. Dare to be different and better, and profit from it.

- **Always strive to improve.**

Business as usual is not a sound business building strategy, and a successful business is one where your work is never done. Every effort possible needs to be directed toward continuous improvement for the long-term viability of your business and your market position. It must start at the top and permeate every fiber of the company. By continuing to learn and train, you have an opportunity to build an essential quality improvement process.

Marketing success is created, not stumbled upon, but it is largely within your control. That is good news. However, it will only be as sound as the effort you put into it. No one or few actions will produce the optimum results. Rather, it will require a series of initiatives managed in consort that will produce rewarding results for you and your business.