100+ Marketing Ideas

Marketing is all about satisfying customer needs. The following represents a comprehensive list of marketing ideas; use it to help better understand customer needs and ways to satisfy those needs.

**General Ideas**
- Never let a day pass without engaging in at least one marketing activity.
- Determine a percentage of gross income to spend annually on marketing.
- Set specific marketing goals every year; review and adjust quarterly.
- Maintain a tickler file of ideas for later use.
- Carry business cards with you (all day, every day).
- Create a personal nametag or pin with your company name and logo on it and wear it at high visibility meetings.

**Target Market**
- Stay alert to trends that might impact your target market, product, or promotion strategy.
- Read market research studies about your profession, industry, product, target market groups, etc.
- Collect competitors' ads and literature; study them for information about strategy, product features, benefits, etc.
- Ask clients why they hired you and solicit suggestions for improvement.
- Ask former clients why they left you.
- Identify a new market.
- Join a list-serve (e-mail list) related to your profession.
• Subscribe to an Internet usenet newsgroup or a list-serve that serves your target market.

**Product Development**
• Create a new service, technique, or product.
• Offer a simpler/cheaper/smaller version of your (or existing) product or service.
• Offer a fancier/more expensive/faster/bigger version of your (or existing) product or service.
• Update your services.

**Education, Resources, and Information**
• Establish a marketing and public relations advisory and referral team composed of your colleagues and/or neighboring business owners; share ideas and referrals and discuss community issues. Meet quarterly for breakfast.
• Create a suggestion box for employees.
• Attend a marketing seminar.
• Read a marketing book.
• Subscribe to a marketing newsletter or other publication.
• Subscribe to a marketing list-serve on the Internet.
• Subscribe to a marketing usenet newsgroup on the Internet.
• Train your staff, clients, and colleagues to promote referrals.
• Hold a monthly marketing meeting with employees or associates to discuss strategy and status and solicit marketing ideas.
• Join an association or organization related to your profession.
• Get a marketing intern to take you on as a client; it will give the intern experience and you some free marketing help.
• Maintain a consultant card file for finding designers, writers, and other marketing professionals. Hire a marketing consultant to brainstorm with.
• Take a creative journey to another progressive city or county to observe and learn from marketing techniques used there.

**Pricing and Payment**
• Analyze your fee structure; look for areas requiring modifications or adjustments. Establish a credit card payment option for clients.
• Give regular clients a discount.
• Learn to barter; offer discounts to members of certain clubs/professional
groups/organizations in exchange for promotions in their publications.
• Give quick pay or cash discounts.
• Offer financing or installment plans.

Marketing Communications
• Publish a newsletter for customers and prospects (it doesn't have to be fancy
or expensive). Develop a brochure of services.
• Include a postage-paid survey card with your brochures and other company
literature. Include check-off boxes or other items that will involve the reader
and provide valuable feedback to you.
• Remember, business cards aren't working for you if they're in the box. Pass
them out! Give prospects two business cards and brochures - one to keep
and one to pass along.
• Produce separate business cards/sales literature for each of your target
market segments (e.g. government and commercial and/or business and
consumer).
• Create a poster or calendar to give away to customers and prospects.
• Print a slogan and/or one-sentence description of your business on
letterhead, fax cover sheets, and invoices. Develop a site on the World Wide
Web.
• Create a signature file to be used for all your e-mail messages. It should
contain contact details, including your Web site address and key information
about your company that will make the reader want to contact you.
• Include testimonials from customers in your literature.
• Test a new mailing list. If it produces results, add it to your current direct
mail lists or consider replacing a list that's not performing up to
expectations.
• Rather than sending direct mail in plain white envelopes, use colored or
oversized envelopes to pique recipients' curiosity.
• Announce free or special offers in your direct response pieces. (Direct
responses may be direct mail, broadcast faxes, or e-mail messages.) Include
the offer in the beginning of the message as well as on the outside of the
envelope for direct mail.

Media Relations
• Update your media list often so that press releases are sent to the right media outlet and person.
• Write a column for the local newspaper, local business journal, or trade publication.
• Publish an article and circulate reprints.
• Send timely and newsworthy press releases as often as needed.
• Publicize your 500th client of the year (or other notable milestone).
• Create an annual award and publicize it.
• Get public relations and media training or read up on it.
• Appear on a radio or TV talk show.
• Create your own TV program on your industry or your specialty. Market the show to your local cable station or public broadcasting station as a regular program, or see if you can air your show on an open access cable channel.
• Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper or trade magazine.
• Take an editor to lunch.
• Get a publicity photo taken and enclose with press releases.
• Consistently review newspapers and magazines for possible PR opportunities.
• Submit tip articles to newsletters and newspapers.
• Conduct industry research and develop a press release or article to announce an important discovery in your field.
• Create a press kit and keep its contents current.

Customer Service and Customer Relations
• Ask your clients to come back again.
• Return phone calls promptly.
• Set up a fax-on-demand or email system to easily respond to customer inquiries.
• Use an answering machine or voice mail system to catch after-hours phone calls. Include basic information in your outgoing messages such as business hours, location, etc.
• Record a memorable message or tip of the day on your outgoing answering machine or voice mail message.
• Ask clients what you can do to help them.
• Take clients out to a ball game, show, or another special event - just send them two tickets with a note. Hold a seminar at your office for clients and prospects.
• Send handwritten thank you notes.
• Send birthday cards and appropriate seasonal greetings.
• Photocopy interesting articles and send them to clients and prospects with a hand-written FYI note and your business card.
• Send a book of interest or other appropriate business gift to a client with a handwritten note.
• Create an area on your Web site specifically for your customers.
• Redecorate your office or location where you meet with your clients.

Networking and Word of Mouth
• Join a Chamber of Commerce or other organization.
• Join or organize a breakfast club with other professionals (not in your field) to discuss business and network referrals.
• Mail a brochure to members of organizations to which you belong.
• Serve on a city board or commission.
• Host a holiday party.
• Hold an open house.
• Send letters to attendees after you attend a conference.
• Join a community list-serve (e-mail list) on the Internet.

Advertising
• Advertise during peak seasons for your business.
• Get a memorable phone number, such as 1-800-WIDGETS.
• Obtain a memorable URL and email address and include them on all marketing materials.
• Provide Rolodex® cards or phone stickers preprinted with your business contact information.
• Promote your business jointly with other professionals via cooperative direct mail.
• Advertise in a specialty directory or in the Yellow Pages.
• Write an ad in another language to reach the non-English-speaking market. Place the ad in a publication that market reads, such as a Hispanic newspaper.
• Distribute advertising specialty products such as pens, mouse pads, or mugs.
• Mail bumps - photos, samples, and other innovative items to your prospect list. (A bump is simply anything that makes the mailing envelope bulge and makes the recipient curious about what's in the envelope!)
• Create a direct mail list of hot prospects.
• Consider non-traditional tactics such as bus backs, billboards, and popular Web sites.
• Project a message on the sidewalk in front of your place of business using a light directed through words etched in a glass window.
• Consider placing ads in your newspaper's classified section.
• Consider a vanity automobile tag with your company name.
• Create a friendly bumper sticker for your car.
• Code your ads and keep records of results.
• Improve your building signage and directional signs inside and out.
• Invest in a neon sign to make your office or storefront window visible at night.
• Create a new or improved company logo or recolor the traditional logo.
• Sponsor and promote a contest or sweepstakes.

Special Events and Outreach
• Get a booth at a fair/trade show attended by your target market.
• Sponsor or host a special event or open house at your business location in cooperation with a local non-profit organization, such as a women's business center. Describe how the organization helped you.
• Give a speech or volunteer for a career day at a high school.
• Teach a class or seminar at a local college or adult education center.
• Sponsor an Adopt-a-Road area in your community to keep roads litter-free. People that pass by the area will see your name on the sign announcing your sponsorship.
• Volunteer your time to a charity or non-profit organization.
• Donate your product or service to a charity auction.
• Appear on a panel at a professional seminar.
• Write a How To pamphlet or article for publishing.
• Produce and distribute an educational CD-ROM or audio/video tape.
• Publish a book.

Sales Ideas
• Start every day with two cold calls.
• Read newspapers, business journals, and trade publications for new business openings, personnel appointments, and promotion announcements made by companies. Send your business literature to appropriate individuals and firms.
• Give your sales literature to your lawyer, accountant, printer, banker, temp agency, office supply salesperson, advertising agency, etc. (Expand your sales force for free!)
• Put your fax number on order forms for easy submission.
• Set up a fax-on-demand or e-mail system to easily distribute responses to company or product inquiries.
• Follow up on your direct mailings, email messages, and broadcast faxes with a friendly telephone call.
• Try using the broadcast fax or email delivery methods instead of direct mail. (Broadcast fax and email allows you to send the same message to many locations at once.)
• Use broadcast faxes or email messages to notify your customers of product service updates.
• Extend your hours of operation.
• Reduce response/turnaround time. Make reordering easy - use reminders. Provide preaddressed envelopes.
• Display product and service samples at your office.
• Remind clients of the products and services you provide that they aren’t currently buying.
• Call and/or send mail to former clients to try and reactivate them.
• Take sales orders over the Internet.

(National Women's Business Center, Washington, D.C., 4/97)

SBA small business association www.sba.gov

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