

## Marketing gameplan for 2009

12/08/08

I'm wondering where I should put my marketing dollars. How much should I budget to spend on promoting the business in the first quarter next year? These are such unusual times. I know we have to remain visible. And I'm not sure that what's worked in the past will work for us now. Any suggestions?

This is a good time for many businesses to promote themselves. Remaining visible is critical. You want to attract new target groups and remind existing prospects of your company's abilities. As a buyer, your dollar often goes further in a recession. And something that attracts attention with the right buyers will help your business grow and build margin.

Start with a list of all possible marketing projects. Shop around to see if prices have changed, or become more competitive. Highlight those projects that can be finished up, or put into action, with a limited amount of time, money and effort.

Make a list of prospect groups you want to target. Find out where they get their information. Evaluate where you're likely to get your best payoff, by attracting attention with your target list of prospect groups.

When the economy slows down, many sellers are willing to spend more time providing advice on what to do, and not do. Use this as an opportunity to do your marketing homework. Ask marketing vendors for advice on what your company needs to be doing better, in marketing.

When putting together your list of marketing projects, include all medium: web, print, direct mail, radio, cable, gifts, and telemarketing, to name a few. Next to each medium, list one or two things that need to be done to get the project off the ground. Note whether those next steps cost money, or come for free.

When thinking about the web, consider the quality of your website. Before you spend a lot of time, money and effort on search engine optimization, make sure you have an appealing site loaded with compelling offers. If you have any concerns about your website, ask one or more web design companies to make recommendations.

If you're thinking about cable or radio, you may find the stations you approach will provide services to help you get the ad ready to go. Newspapers and magazines often provide layout services. Telemarketing vendors will probably help you develop scripts and calling lists.

As you interview marketing vendors for advice and solutions, don't hesitate to ask for specials. Look for opportunities to get additional concessions if you meet specific volume hurdles. In many cases you'll find that vendors have excess capacity they're trying to put to good use. If you're able to consume capacity, you're valuable.

Once you have a list of possible projects and ballpark costs, prioritize the list. Knock off any that can be completed with limited time and money. Identify any projects where you're getting a big concession from the vendor.

Then go to your list of groups you want to target. Consider a mix of existing customer populations and newer target groups. Be sure to promote existing products and services to new target populations, and test out new products or services with existing client groups.

Reaching existing customer groups, you may find is easier with direct mail, and telemarketing. It's more likely that an existing customer will open an envelope, read a postcard or take a telemarketing call.

Exposing new targets to your company means making lots of announcements to the population and finding out who's listening. Often in a recession buyers are more hesitant, especially when they don't have an existing relationship. It may take a combination of marketing efforts to break through. Think coordinated campaign. For example, try an ad on cable, radio, newspaper or magazine, followed by a postcard offer or phone call to the likely audience, referencing the ad, tied to a coupon offer on the web.

If you can, do some homework on where your prospects get their information. Do they go to trade shows? Do they read trade magazines, popular magazines, listen to radio, watch TV? Interview prospects to find out about behavior changes related to the recession: are they more or less likely to go to a trade show, attend a community based event, take a phone call from a stranger?

Once you've done your homework, and put together a list of options and costs, it's time to put the plan together and launch it. You're going to have to make some decisions about where you're likely to get your best payoff, by attracting attention with your targets. Set up specific trials, to see if you can achieve what you want within a limited timeframe. Be very critical if results are coming in below expectation, and don't hesitate to quickly make changes.

Looking for a good book? Try Big Business Marketing for Small Business Budgets by Jeanette Maw McMurtry.

*Business owners regularly turn to Ask Andi and Strategy Leaders for advice on how to grow profitable, successful companies. They find what they need time after time. Specific advice is available at [www.AskAndiBlog.com](http://www.AskAndiBlog.com). Ask Andi is also published weekly in the Westchester and Fairfield County Business Journals and Hudson Valley Business. Written by Strategy Leaders President, Andi Gray, the Ask Andi column is a rich source of advice for owners of established, privately held businesses.*

*If you are a business owner and you have a question or would like to discuss some aspect of your business, call [1.877.238.3535](tel:18772383535) or send an email to [AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com](mailto:AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com).*