

FAST FACTS 25: PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS

Promotion is a marketing activity that aims to persuade others and influence their attitudes and behaviour about your business and what you are selling.

It is an important feature in getting your goods and services noticed in the marketplace and a way to attract more business. You may be at the right place at the right time, but your customers and potential customers need to know about it!

How to promote

Promotion can be carried out in different ways, through:

- personal selling
- advertising
- publicity
- public relations
- sales promotion
- networking

Personal selling is face to face communication (or sometimes on the telephone) with the potential customer. This type of promotion would be best used for goods/services that need a lot of technical explanation (eg, car sales, computer equipment etc).

Advertising is a paid form of communication about goods/services. Advertising can be done through:

- magazines and newspapers
- radio and television
- signs/posters/billboards
- direct mail
- business cards
- brochures
- gimmicks and 'freebies'
- junk mail
- telephone directories (including on-line)
- Internet/Web

FAST FACTS 25: PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS

Publicity is an unpaid form of communication about your business. It is more credible with potential customers than advertising. Publicity avoids paying advertising or media costs, by:

- persuading a newspaper to print an article about your business
- going on a Talk Radio to discuss your business, instead of paying for an advertisement
- sponsoring a sporting team to give your business name exposure in the community

Public relations

Is about developing and maintaining good relations with your customers and suppliers, your staff, and the public. A key part of public relations is the image you project. First impressions mean everything, and the attitude of staff towards your customers is also important. Consider the way they speak on the phone, their appearance, is there a personal touch? Do they meet the need of the customer? Are they well trained about what the business is offering?

Networking

Is a form of public relations, which involves using the contacts you have to help assist your business, by promotion and recommendation. Networking can make you new friends, increase your peer support, business contacts and your capability to create revenue. It also allows you to gain access to new information that you can use to grow your business.

Networks that you could access include:

- professional and trade organisations (eg, Chamber of Commerce NT, regional business associations, etc)
- community service organisations
- clubs
- political parties
- conservation groups
- charity and welfare organisations
- churches
- cultural groups

You can use these networks as a form of promoting your business, as consumers consider word of mouth to be a reliable source.

Sales promotion includes a range of promotional activities – other than advertising, publicity and personal selling – designed to stimulate interest, trial or purchase.

This can be done through:

- samples
- tradeshow
- gifts and give-aways
- calendars and diaries
- contests

FAST FACTS 25: PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS

- meetings
- displays

Some good gift ideas are items that customers would use daily (eg, pens, note pads, keyrings and mouse pads). These work because they act as constant reminders of your business.

When to promote

To get value for your promotion dollars, it is important to identify the best times to advertise. Some goods and services need continuous promotion, as the purchase cycles of the customers are not erratic. Other products may be affected by seasonal trends and are promoted heavily at specific times of the year (eg, summer/winter, tourist season, school holidays, special calendar dates).

The stage of your product on the 'product life cycle' will also influence your promotional activities. For example, new and innovative products may require heavy promotion when first introduced to the market while established products generally require less intense promotion.

The important thing is to create a regular program for communicating with your customers, to constantly remind them of your business and what you are offering.

Tips for successful promotion

With any form of promotion your aim is to get the potential customers' attention, then keep their interest and develop it into a desire to buy. Make them think that your product is necessary and desirable, by promoting the **benefits** to them, not just the physical features of your product.

Once you have persuaded them into wanting your product, it needs to be exchanged for an action – the action of purchasing. Then your promotion has been successful!

It is important to understand that people don't buy goods or services – they buy benefits. Remember, customers want value and solutions to their problems and needs.

Other helpful hints

Be careful to choose the most effective and worthwhile promotional techniques for your business. The aim is to reach the greatest number of potential customers in your market, within your budget.

Use persuasive and attention-getting words, such as:

- "results"
- "bargain"
- "efficient"
- "discover"
- "quality"
- "new"
- "save"

Monitor the results of your promotional activities and review your selling efforts so that you can improve on them. Provide a physical element to the intangible character of a service. The customer needs to feel as though they have **received** something. Under-promise but over-deliver! Deliver your promise. You lose your credibility when promises are broken, as many other businesses do the same thing and you will be 'just like the others'.

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Maintaining a consistent theme and style is important in developing a memorable business image. Focus on your unique and competitive advantage - tell your customers what makes your business better than others. Be original and creative.

For more information refer to other Fast Facts in this series or contact:

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