

MARKET YOURSELF TO BE PERCEIVED AS AN EXPERT

by DEBBIE JO EVANS
For the Austin Business Journal

One reason many small business marketing efforts fail is that owners attempt to use big business strategies

which cost too much and are simply not effective for small businesses. Fortunately, you can run a successful small business marketing program on a shoestring budget. The key is to choose only those strategies proven to work for small businesses and to invest the time in making them work.

One of the best ways for small business owners or professionals to market themselves is the perceived-expert technique. This strategy involves presenting yourself as the source for information in your area of expertise, or niche.

The first step in using this technique is to select a niche, or area of expertise, which you will market. Your actual expertise probably extends to a multitude of areas. For marketing, however, you will need to narrow your niche to one or two areas.

There are several things to consider when selecting your niche.

You should already be very knowledgeable in this area. You will be presenting a great deal of information on this topic and the more you already know, the less time and effort will be involved in your initial activities.

You should be willing to stay up-to-date on the latest information and trends in this area through reading trade journals and/or attending educational seminars.

Your target market must want or need more information on this area.

Once you have selected your marketing niche, you must let everybody know you are an expert in this area. Only when you are perceived as an expert will you actually be an expert.

Feature your knowledge

Writing feature articles for publications with a targeted market is an excellent way to present yourself as an expert. Not only does the article show your knowledge, you receive the added benefit of an implied endorsement from the publication which publishes the article.

The key is to know who you are targeting and where to find them. What publications do they read? And write clearly and concisely (no jargon) with

practical information the reader can use right away.

Develop a regular program of sending informative news releases to the media. Editors want to publish news that is beneficial to their readers. If you send a news release which explains a difficult process or gives a solution to a common problem, they'll be much more interested in using it.

The difference in these mini-articles and feature articles is that you can send these same news releases to every media contact on your list. Each of your feature articles will be targeted to one publication.

The advantages of the perceived-expert technique are numerous. Not only do you establish yourself as expert with the publications' readers (your target market), you're reinforcing your role as an expert with the editors and, hopefully, when these editors need a source, they will remember you.

The bottom-line for your business is this: When your prospects are deciding which business to patronize, yours or your competitors, they will be more likely to choose yours because they've learned more about their business needs (your niche) from your articles and news releases. They believe you are the expert.

Assuming your service lives up to your reputation, you should always come out ahead of your competition. **ABJ**

Debbie Jo Evans provides copywriting, editing and consulting services for do-it-yourself marketers and specializes in prPLUS For a free copy of her special report, Ten Easy Ways to Increase your Business (without increasing your budget), call 512-416-7893.

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DECEMBER 5-11, 1994 • SMALL BUSINESS MONTHLY

SUPPLEMENT TO THE AUSTIN BUSINESS JOURNAL

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