

TECHNIQUES FOR TOUGH TIMES Don't Let the Recession Hamper Your Marketing Efforts

WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH, WE ALL WANT TO SAVE MONEY. OFTEN THIS LEADS TO CUTTING BACK ON RESOURCES AND LIMITING OUR COMPANY'S MARKETING BUDGETS. ALTHOUGH PRUDENCE IS A VIRTUE, NOW IS EXACTLY NOT THE TIME TO DRASTICALLY REDUCE YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS.

Here's the good news: even if your company is small, you can invest in its future with some techniques that are relatively simple and easy. Here are some ideas to get started:

MAKE RELATIONSHIPS COUNT: This is the time when all of the relationships you've cultivated over the years come to fruition. In fact, your name and reputation may be what save you in tough times. When people have limited resources and even more limited funds, their choice is often to go with someone whose work they know.

BE CLIENT CENTRIC: Stellar customer service may just be the point of differentiation that brings in repeat business. Face it, not everyone comes by this naturally—now is the time to invest in your company's future with a little employee training. Educate your customers: establish yourself as their resource of choice with newsletters or other pertinent information.

BOOST YOUR PROFILE: Credibility can unlock doors in today's uncertain world. Take the time to attend conferences or speak at industry

events. Make it your goal to come back from each conference you attend with new contacts or additional work. Write an article for an industry publication and send it to your customers. Send out press releases and toot your own horn about recent successes.

CONSIDER YOUTUBE: Unleash your creativity! Because uploading videos is free and the potential reach is enormous, YouTube offers an attractive way to market your company's service with relatively low barriers to entry. You can point your Web site right to YouTube or choose to send the link via e-mail.

FORGE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: Developing a strategic alliance allows each party to combine resources in a way that benefits both. With an alliance you can promote your services and talents to your strategic partner's market, thus expanding your customer base. Creating a strategic alliance may allow you to pool your firm's expertise with someone who has experience with a different property type, or is located in a new geographic area.

To ensure a successful alliance, first determine whether joining forces will give you a competitive edge. If the answer is yes, then be particular about the partner you select. Take a look at existing relationships, and then consider providers of complimentary services such as brokers, vendors, even customers.

There are countless ways to market your company. Often, the best marketing tool you have is yourself. ■



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