

Ask SCORE...

Counselors to Naples Area Small Businesses

SCORE Naples
www.scorenaples.org



Got business questions?

Ask SCORE

By: Gray Poehler, Business Counselor

How To Market Your Business

QUESTION: *Faced with the usual seasonal slowdown, I would like some ideas for marketing my business during the off season.*

Glenn, D., Bonita Springs

ANSWER: *Glenn, marketing is not something one can turn on and off as the need arises. Many people often equate marketing with sales and advertising. These are, of course, important elements of a marketing strategy. There are a host of tools and tactics that can increase both the visibility and attractiveness of your business to potential customers. And as with your overall business structure, successful marketing requires careful research, planning, and a wise use of time and resources.*

The key is to think of marketing not as a single action but a combination of steps designed to identify, attract and retain profitable customers. You must find ways to differentiate your business from the competition. This encompasses everything from your company name, logo, advertisements, trade shows, networking, public relations and community involvement.

You can learn from your competition, but what works for them may not always be appropriate for you. Marketing strategies need to be tailored to your business and target customer base. To prepare yourself, create a detailed profile of your ideal prospect. As you design your marketing message, aim it at them and list the benefits your customer will receive. Be certain your message highlights the special knowledge and expertise that differentiates you from your competition. Look for ways to make the buying process easier for your customer. Remove the roadblocks and try to simplify the decision making process.

Put your marketing budget in proper perspective. Try to set a budget and a pace that lets you market continuously, not just during seasonal slowdowns. Customer's memories are short and they are constantly bombarded with hundreds of marketing messages and images every day. Your effort must be ongoing or people will quickly

forget. Repetition really does pay off. A radio or TV commercial is of little value unless it is shown many times, over an extended period of time.

Match your marketing to your primary market. If it is a local market, then that's where your focus should be. Broadly focused newspaper or radio advertising, for example, might be the wrong choice. Instead, consider marketing neighborhood-by-neighborhood in community or regional publications.

A good place to find marketing help is the American Marketing Association's Web site www.MarketingPower.com. The sites Best Practices section contains valuable guidance for small business in the areas of research, Internet marketing, advertising, public relations, customer service and many others.

*Advice is also available from the Naples Chapter of SCORE, Counselors to America's Small Businesses. **FREE** business counseling is offered to US citizens and legal aliens. Here you'll meet knowledgeable volunteers ready to help you realize your dream. Just call 239-430-0081 or visit our web site WWW.SCORENAPLES.ORG and click on "request counseling now as a first time client." The SCORE business office is located at 900 Goodlette Road North, in the Fifth Third branch bank building. Office hours are 9:00 AM to Noon, Mondays through Fridays.*

*SCORE will present a **FREE** workshop titled "How to Market Your Business" Saturday, May 17, from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM, at the Collier County public library, 650 Central Avenue, in downtown Naples. To register log on to www.scorenaples.org and click on "Workshops", or call 239-430-0081.*

If you would like an answer to your question, please fill out the form located at www.scorenaples.org/askscore. A counselor will contact you within 48 hours. Please include your name, email address and a contact phone number.