
Marketing Made Simple Through Automation

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By Kathleen Gage

In years past, marketing simply meant running a few ads, doing a bit of direct mail and maybe putting up a poster or billboard. Today, things have changed. Not only do you have the front end marketing and promotions in order to gain customers and clients, you absolutely must have a good system in place to follow up with your customers and keep your name fresh in their mind. Additionally, competition has become increasingly fierce.

With the advent of the Internet and specific types of technology, there are ways to do this with ease. The fear some people have, especially in smaller communities, is that use of the Internet and technology will take away the human aspect of doing business. Although this may be true in some cases, fact is, proper use of technology can allow you to have more time to spend with your customers. Again, it is about putting systems in place to better serve you and your customers/clients.

Use technology to your customer's advantage. Although you might not be ready to embrace all that technology can do for you, your customers may be. A few things to consider are:

- Email follow up
- Databases and contact management programs
- Card scanners
- Auto Responders

Technology allows you to respond to your customer's inquiries immediately. It's amazing how many people said they didn't get callbacks or emails back from someone in a company they wanted to do business with. More amazing is how many companies lose sight of the importance to have a system in place that allows them to develop a marketing strategy for people who are already doing business with them. Rather, they invest the majority of their time and money with programs designed to go after new customers.

Imagine how much lost revenue occurs because of poor follow-up. Again, good follow up should be a major part of your marketing strategy.

Develop a system where you can keep in touch with your customers not just right after the sale, but on a regular basis.

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Capture contact information

Do what you can to capture key information on your customers. This can be done by getting their business cards, having them fill in a response card, or you fill out an information card on them. Input the information into a database as quickly as possible. If you don't input information immediately, names and information pile up and then it becomes almost impossible to catch up. Again, it is a matter of putting a system in place that allows you to stay on top of what you are doing.

Databases and Contact Management Programs

A good contact management program will help you to keep track of your customers. There are several on the market. Depending on the size and type of your business you can either use a good off-the-shelf brand or you may have to have one that is specific to your industry. A good off-the-shelf brand is ACT! www.act.com

Business Card Scanners

If you collect a lot of business cards, you will want to consider getting a card scanner. This is a device that links up to your contact management program and you scan in the information from business cards you have collected. One of the best on the market is called Card Scan®. www.cardscan.com Although the scanner captures most of the information, you will have to do a bit of clean up. However, if you collect a lot of business cards, this is a must have.

Immediately upon inputting the card information into your database, send out an email or thank you cards to people you met and begin the process of keeping in touch.

Auto Responders

A good auto responder can take orders from your web sites, send out follow up letters to customers, automate digital delivery of information, track the visitors and sales, follow up with prospects, and take subscriptions to your mailing list or ezine. An auto responder is an excellent way to stay on top of requests that come via your web site. Get Response is a very popular auto responder. www.getresponse.com

Make Doing Business With You As Easy As Possible

People are busy. And yet, they want to be informed. Make the experience with you one in which the customer feels like you want to work with them instead of against them. Simplicity for your customers/clients is a powerful marketing strategy.

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Kathleen Gage is a business advisor, keynote speaker, trainer and author working with family-owned businesses, franchised organizations, corporations in both the private and public sector in areas of marketing, PR, customer relations and employee satisfaction. Visit www.kathleengage.com or email kathleen@turningpointpresents.com or call 801.466-3630.