

Three Specific Small Business Marketing Strategies I've Used At My Store

(And More Importantly, How To Avoid Wasting Thousands Of Dollars On Ads That Don't Work)

If you own a small business, you wear a lot of hats.

Sometimes you wear all the hats.

The most frustrating “hat,” however, can be marketing.

You are already running on all cylinders to get your business through day to day operations, so what time does that leave for you to figure out the best advertising options? And honestly, the only people who have attempted to help you with advertising have probably advised you that it will take a few months of thousands of dollars worth of commitments to see the results. They try to convince you that throwing money somewhere in the “marketing bucket” is better than doing nothing. Leaving you to conclude that you aren't quite in the position to afford marketing just yet.

Here's the catch, though.

What if none of that was true?

What if it didn't take months of commitment and thousands of dollars to see results?

What if effective marketing wasn't about a catchy jingle or the perfect picture?

What if you couldn't afford not to be the “marketer” of your business?

Here are three marketing theories you should know about if you own a small business, what to avoid, & most importantly how to not waste your hard earned money!

1) Big Box Traffic Theory.

I call this strategy the “big box” because it's the most often used strategy in big box retail stores. And, the most frequently adopted strategy of brick & mortar small businesses. The idea is to create foot traffic by offering discounts, sales, or promotions.

Multiple BOGO offers or 20% OFF coupons litter our email inboxes, newspapers, & magazines. You'll see a big push for these promotions during the holidays, but the truth is, they never end. There is always a coupon. There is always a sales rack.

What to Avoid.

To be clear, the discount is not the problem. Coupons are not evil.

It's the use of a discount or coupon as the sole value to the customer that is the problem.

Every customer is asking one question of you as a business owner:

“Why should I do business with you?”

As a small business, if your answer is: “Because we'll give you 50% OFF,” then chances are you aren't long for Main Street, USA. Your challenge as a business owner is to create value for your customers. This actually has little to do with the price of your product or service.

In reality, it doesn't bode well for big box stores long term, either. That's why so many are going out of business left & right. They've created a customer base that only values them for what discount they can offer. Their customers are not loyal. Their customers will not purchase anything full price...Why would they if it's going on sale next week or tomorrow's email is bound to hold a coupon?

Tread carefully & thoughtfully if you choose this “Big Box” strategy. It's not proving to be a profitable road long term...for even the big box stores.

2. The Print Ad Train

This strategy is the use of any traditional print: newspaper, magazine, or even radio. I call this a “train,” because once you get on, they make it very hard to get off.

I have no issues with any of these media outlets or traditional print. In fact, I'm a daily

subscriber to the “old fashioned, gets thrown in your yard at 5 a.m.” Wall Street Journal. I thumb through magazines in the grocery line. I even listen to the radio occasionally on my way to work.

However, I've wasted a lot of money (in the thousands) “advertising” with these guys. I've fallen prey to their “three time promotion” or “holiday insert special.” I've given into the idea that their fifty thousand subscribers or listeners would shop with me...if I only spent \$700. But then, of course, if I really wanted my money to make a difference, it would take time to cultivate results. SO, the best option is to commit to six ads over the next few months. Then, I would really have a “brand” & I would see the foot traffic.

This is why it's a train.

And, in my experience (along with just about every other business owner I've talked to) the train leads to nowhere.

What to Avoid.

The lesson here is simple. Do not waste your marketing dollars on advertising you can't measure. Period.

The truth is that these traditional outlets give you absolutely no way to tell how your advertisement is performing. They can tell you it reached fifty thousand people, but can they tell you who actually read it or heard it? Nope.

Now, here's the crazy part.

When you tell the sales agents this, they encourage you to follow the “Big Box” strategy & offer a coupon. Every time. You know why? Because there is no other way to track their audience's response to your ad.

I've done two experiments testing my theory that traditional print is ineffective. One with a newspaper ad & the other with a magazine ad. In every ad I offered the same FREE video tutorial if you visited the website in the ad.

I did this not because I knew I was correct in my assumption, but so I would have some ammunition when the advertising salesperson came knocking next month.

Here are the results:

Traditional Print vs. Digital Experiment

Newspaper: Spent \$700 for a half page ad. It generated 25 leads. That's about \$28/lead.

Magazine: Spent \$750 for a half page ad. It generated 3 leads. That's about \$250/lead.

Digital Ad: Spent \$200 for two weeks. It generated 485 leads. That's about \$0.42/lead.

You tell me which one was more effective.

3. List Building Engagement Strategy.

This strategy is basically comprised of two objectives:

1. Continually building your customer or prospective customer list with contact information
2. Continually engage that list with valuable content using their contact information

You've heard it said that your customer base is your greatest asset.

This is true...however...

The extent to which it actually impacts your bottom line depends on your ability to

create value for your customers.

Building a List

This is the best way to utilize coupons, discounts, or promotions:

Ask for their contact information in return!

Coupons should be a two way street. The customer or potential customer gets a great deal and you get their information to build your list.

The secret is to offer these coupons with a reason and to know your value ahead of time so that the person wants to use this coupon as an excuse to try you out! Once they've taken advantage of your offer, use their contact information to follow up with them by providing valuable information they genuinely want.

Generally, the better the deal, the more contact information you can get (mailing address, phone number, etc.). More detailed information equals more ways to follow up with that person.

This is the way to avoid the pitfalls associated with the “Big Box Traffic” strategy mentioned earlier.

And it doesn't have to be a coupon...if you have a business with high price tags where a coupon or discount isn't really feasible, then consider creating content that you can “give away” in exchange for customers or potential customer's contact information. Create a tutorial or “Top Three Mistakes Most People Make When...” that positions **you** as the expert in your industry or community. Ultimately, this is a valuable asset to create no matter what kind of business you have.

Engaging Your List

The most challenging & rewarding task for a business owner is to figure out what exactly they do to create value for their customers.

The most detrimental assumption is that your service or product is the value.

In a world where you can find just about any product or service in multiple places, this is simply not true.

A coffee shop, for example, cannot possibly imagine that customers actually shop with them because they have created the most uniquely delicious cup of coffee. Obviously, customers enjoy the coffee, but what causes them to patronize that particular coffee shop time and again is more than likely the **experience** that coffee shop creates around its coffee. Think that sounds crazy? Look to Starbucks as the greatest example. They created an “experience” around their coffee that allowed them to charge \$5 for a cup of coffee that would cost \$1 anywhere else.

Is it really because their coffee is that much better than you can make at home?

Nope.

It's because their customers enjoy visiting a Starbucks location. Because their coffee shop became a place where friends could gather together, students could study, and business people could meet.

If their business success really was all about getting **the best** cup of coffee, then the worst thing they could have done was to package their own coffee to sell in grocery stores! Why would they put that value in your hands at home??? Yet today you can't pass the coffee aisle without seeing at least one package of Starbucks on the shelf.

So, you as the business owner, need to answer your customer's question:

“Why should I shop with *you*?”

In the clothing industry? The answer can't be just that you offer the best clothes.

You can get clothes anywhere.

Maybe it's because you teach people how to buy the most flattering shapes and styles?

Auto mechanics? I can name five places within two minutes of my driveway where I can get the exact same services.

But I'd shop with YOU if you had the most family friendly lobby where my kids and I could sit comfortably in the air conditioning and enjoy a free WiFi while I wait for my car to be serviced. I would even **pay more for that experience** versus the average dirty waiting area where you can't escape the noise or nauseating smell of oil.

Figure out what makes you valuable to your customer.

Then, constantly remind your customer about it.

This “List Building/Engagement” strategy is what I've personally used over the past year with remarkable results. Without hesitation, I can say it has outperformed any other past marketing efforts.

Best of all, it didn't take a long time to see results. In fact, my very first digital ad to “build my list” resulted in 300+ people opting in with their full contact information & doubling my sales that weekend!

My business is UP when most others are down & for the first time I feel empowered to be able to **proactively grow my business.**

Using this strategy, you can anticipate your “slow” times & plan accordingly.

January a slow month historically? Run a digital ad, host an event, or give a free PDF that reminds your customers why you're valuable to them...and have your best January ever.

I have seen increased foot traffic, profitability, and an engaged customer base all at a fraction of the price I used to spend on “marketing.”

The amazing part is that it's so effective you can't help but wonder,
“What if I spend \$200 instead of \$100 next time?”

If you want to

- empower yourself and proactively increase your business,
- get quality customers who become lifetime customers
- increase your foot traffic,
- or simply learn more about the specific digital marketing tactics I personally used that pair well with this strategy (at a fraction of the cost of traditional efforts),

Email me (JordanMortonMarketing@gmail.com) to set up a phone call & start today. I'll share with you the specific ad strategy I used to start building my list & double sales in one weekend.

Remember, marketing should:

1. get customers through your door
2. in a relatively short period of time
3. without spending thousands of dollars

If your marketing is not doing these three things, it isn't working. PERIOD.

Stop wasting your money & your time.

Email me today: JordanMortonMarketing@gmail.com