

## SALES, MARKETING & PROMOTION

# FIND A PARTNER TO HELP MARKET TO NEW AUDIENCES

Be sure that your goals line up and then be creative about promotion

— BY RICK VIAR

In a crowded and cluttered marketplace, it has become increasingly more critical to find new and effective ways to gain market share. Promoting a business used to be a lot simpler—you could run a few ads, send a few direct mail pieces and keep customers happy with incentives.

### MUTUAL BENEFITS

Today, with the myriad marketing messages facing consumers, the solution is to develop out-of-the-box marketing techniques that cut through the clutter. One tactic that successfully creates new marketing opportunities is to cross promote your business with another business or partnering with non-traditional allies.

Chances are, you won't have to look very far to find a cross-marketing partner whose objectives are in line with your company's. Take a look at vendors, community and business organizations in your area. They can be a great place to start. The "what's in it for me?" factor always prevails, so before you approach a vendor or ally, first give thoughtful consideration

to the benefits they will receive by partnering with your company. And don't overlook the most important part—the campaign should mutually benefit both parties.

Once you've found the right partner and you've agreed to promote each other's businesses, the next step is to get creative on the offer. Is your product or service a value add to your partner's? Do they complement each other? Understanding how each other's product or service relates to the customer will only make it easier to sell.

### LEVERAGE THE PARTNERSHIP

Now that your company has additional marketing messengers, how can you leverage them most effectively? First of all, educate your new partners on the core competencies of your company and provide instruction on how to leverage your product with theirs. This may be more of a challenge than you expect. Keep in mind that the value proposition must be clear and easy for employees to understand. It must make sense.

For example, consider hosting a kick-off event for associates of both companies or organizations to help explain the promotion and why it makes sense for the partners. The event should be fun and interactive, yet educational, with the ultimate goal of encouraging members of both organizations to think creatively about how the two partners can benefit each other.

In some cases, profit won't matter; particularly if you are a for-profit partnering with a not-for-profit. Just make sure that your goals are the same—whether they are to increase profits or increase awareness and create community credibility. If you find that's not the case with your cross-marketing partner, you might want to reconsider. If this isn't a win-win for everyone, it might not be the right fit.

### EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES

Launching a cross promotion can give your business the spark it needs to pique your customers' interest with something new and exciting at a time when things

may be getting stale. The promotion can give you the opportunity to talk to our customers about something other than your core competencies or to promote ancillary services. And, it can give your cross-marketing partners another reason to touch their key audiences. So, when thinking about how to spice up your marketing, consider partnering with a company or organization that has a different perspective. It might lead to other customer opportunities.

The final key to a successful cross promotion is consistent execution. If the program isn't ingrained in the fabric of the company, the full potential of the promotion may not be realized. That means you might be spending a lot of time and effort on something that doesn't give a return on your investment.

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