



10 Tips for Marketing Offline

Social networking is now a way of life. I imagine that if you poll 10 random people, more than half will have a Facebook account, Twitter account or both. Small businesses have also jumped online, which is great. Social networking is all about building relationships and making connections. However, I've seen some entrepreneurs rely too much on the Internet for marketing. Yes, it's important, but don't forget to market your business offline, too. Below, I offer 10 ways you can marketing your business offline. Try some of these tips in between your latest RT or Facebook group status update:

- 1. Join your local Chamber of Commerce or another offline small business association.** This offers you an opportunity to network with other entrepreneurs. In addition to getting potential clients, you may also find businesses you want to partner with, encouragement and group discounts on business-related items.
- 2. Carry business cards that have your full contact information, and pass them out.** Make sure to have a well-designed business card that clearly states the purpose of your business and how to reach you. Your business name and contact information might not be enough, especially if your company name is unique. When a potential client fishes your business card out of his wallet a week later, you want him to remember that X Y Z, Inc. is a web design company and not a dry cleaning business.
- 3. Create an elevator pitch about your business** that can be used when asked, "What do you do for a living?" This pitch does not have to be long and should get to the heart of what you do and who you serve. Remember to be descriptive but not overwhelming. For example, instead of saying "I'm a consultant," try "I'm a consultant who focuses on creating marketing plans for non-profits that don't have a dedicated marketing staff. How about you?"
- 4. Attend trade shows or conferences for your industry** (make sure you have #2 and #3 from above ready), and follow up with every contact you meet. If you can afford it, consider setting up a booth for your business.
- 5. Enlist the help of past customers by offering a referral program.** Many people still turn to friends and family for business referrals. One way to keep your company top of mind is to offer past customers a referral incentive for getting you new clients. The type of incentive will depend on your business but can range from discounted products/services to gift cards.
- 6. Host a free workshop on a topic relevant to your business.** This will be easier if you have already done step #1 above. Sharing your knowledge with others helps establish you as an expert on a given topic and ensures a captive audience. Make sure all handouts are branded with your company information. Have business cards available and even consider offering a sign-up sheet for those who would like to join your company's mailing list.
- 7. Brand your letterhead, envelopes, business checks and even email signature.** Every piece of business correspondence should remind potential customers about your company. If there's room, include your tagline or a short description of your business. While an email signature isn't considered offline, it's a great place to put your business information. You may send a "catching up with you" email to a friend and come back with a client.
- 8. Offer your products or services for charity events.** Depending on what you offer, your company may be perfect for a silent auction or giveaway bag.
- 9. Send holiday cards with a branded trinket.** Make sure your customers know you care by sending them yearly holiday cards. Depending on the amount of cards you need to send, consider writing a personal message inside. Don't forget to include a couple of business cards and a branded trinket (e.g. notepad, pen, etc.) if you're able.
- 10. Wear/use your product.** This applies mostly to businesses that offer product, but show your customers why your product is the best. If you're a clothing designer, wear your designs. If you sell make-up, be sure to wear the latest colors. Find ways to weave your product into everyday life, especially if it is unique. Then you'll be happy to respond when asked, "Hey, where did you get that..."

These are 10 tips to get you started on the path of offline marketing. Good luck!