



MARKETING YOUR IMAGE

EFFECTIVE SELLING ISN'T JUST BUYING ADS AND MAKING PRODUCT

by Russ Proch

While there is no single best way to approach the development of a marketing program, following a disciplined planning process can make a marketing program more effective for your business. And, it's important to realize that when we talk about a marketing program, we are not limiting it to traditional advertising.

Identify Your Image

It's important to begin with determining the most desirable image for your business or product.

Should your business/product be viewed as premium or value-added?

Do you want your business/product to be known for taste? Quality? Convenience?

What about ethnicity? Are there certain ethnic group or groups that you want to appeal to?

The answers to these and other questions can be based on several factors, including:

The image you want for your business/product.

The strengths and unique advantages that your business/product provides. (Be honest in your appraisal of these.)

The weaknesses that your business/product has. (Be honest here, too.)

The strengths and weaknesses of other businesses/products in your market.

Make sure you determine the best possible image. Because all marketing efforts should be designed to support this image.

Tell the Story

The next step is how to communicate this image. Many tools are available, and they include:

Traditional media advertising, such as print, radio, television

Electronic media, such as web sites, banners, webinars, blogs

Direct mail

Sponsorships of industry or association events

Your own events, such as an open houses, press conferences, special events

Consider these and other ways to establish your image. Then, determine which of them can work best for you, given your unique market situation.

Maximize Your Message

Perhaps the most commonly asked question is, "How can I develop communications messages that best establish the desired image for my product or business?" Again there is no right answer, but rather several alternatives that have both benefits and drawbacks.

Doing it yourself is certainly the least expensive way. But just as you have developed a specific set of skills, others have developed the same marketing and communications skills. Why not take advantage of them?

The media themselves often will develop ads or commercials for you at no cost for use in their paper or on their station. Certainly they are experienced in this area. How do you expand these messages to other venues? And how do you ensure consistency from one medium to another?

Local independent freelance professionals in your market could be of assistance. You will have to pay for their services (although less than using a full-service advertising agency), but they often do very high-quality work. Unfortunately, you will be limited by the specific skills of one individual.

The best alternative is the use of a full-service marketing communications company. Ideally, this should be a company that understands the unique aspects of your profession while also being able to provide much more than just advertising. This alternative has the highest direct cost. But it's not simply a cost; it is an investment. A good company, as your marketing partner, will also produce the best results for you.

Remember, there is no one right way to market. But the biggest mistake businesses make is trying to be everything to everyone. Determine what you want to be, then use the best tools available.



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