

## 5 Frugal Tips for Marketing Your New Small Business



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### About the Author

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**Starting a new small business is no easy task.** There are seemingly thousands of items that need to be attended to just to get your new business formed and opened for business. But, I argue, the most important thing that you must do is get customers to buy your product or service. Yes, creating your brand, establishing your website and advertising your business are all things that you need to do, but they cost money. Sometimes they cost lots of money. There are important and effective actions that you can take that need not be expensive. Yes, they will take some of your time, but these inexpensive ideas will bear fruit long after any single advertisement, grand opening or sale.

1. **Traditional Networking** – The least expensive way to get the word out about your business is to work with your existing network of colleagues, friends and acquaintances. Everyone has a personal and professional network. Let your contacts know what you are doing and why your product or service is the best available in your area.

**Elevator Pitch** - New business owners should develop an ‘Elevator Pitch’, a less than 10 second description of what you do and why your product or service is unique and applicable to a particular audience. Think about stepping into an elevator and seeing an acquaintance from your past. He asks, ‘How are you?’ You have 4 floors to get your message across. If you have a well thought out statement, you can get that message across before the elevator door opens at his or your destination. It’s not just for elevators, of course. It can come spilling out of your mouth on the sidewalk, at family gatherings, chance encounters on the street, when you meet someone new. Never miss a chance to make a good impression.

**Groups** – You no doubt are a member of several groups. Your family group, your church group, your child’s soccer team’s parent group. Any group that you belong to is a target for your message about your business. Also consider groups that help you make contact with potential clients. Chambers of Commerce are great organizations that provide businesses with opportunities to network thru their business meetings, after hours socials and special events.

**Your personal email contacts** – Email has been around long enough that it can now be considered a traditional networking tool. Use your email address book to let people know that you are starting a new business and don’t be afraid to ask them to pass the information along to their network contacts as well. If they know you and know your business offerings are valuable, they will very likely pass the information along.

2. **Public Relations** – Here are a few ideas that let you get the word about your business out to people you don’t know. Public Relations includes anything that gets your name out to a broad audience for little or no money.

**Write an Article** – Most towns have local papers that crave local stories. Write an article about your new business and send it to them with a picture of you and your business location. Describe what your business is and why you have a unique value proposition. And, don't stop writing. If you have new products or services or just want to provide information to your customer base, write another article. It will draw customers to your business.

You can also help out a starving reporter. They are always looking for new story ideas or background on a story they are writing. Your business expertise might be just the nugget they need to make their story come to life. Go to <http://www.helpareporter.com/sources> and sign up to provide help to a reporter. This website has free as well as paid options.

**Become a sponsor** – Okay, this might cost a little money, but why not sponsor a local youth sports team, or be a corporate sponsor of a charity or charity fund raiser like Walk/Run event. It's not a lot of money and is worthwhile spending as long as you are getting your business name out in front of potential customers and you get to support something you have a passion for.

**Give a Speech** – You are a subject matter expert on whatever product or service your new business provides. Perhaps there are local groups that invite speakers to their events that have an interest in your area of expertise. Remember to practice before you put yourself out in front of a critical audience? You are obviously now an expert on starting a new business. See if there is a teacher in your local school system who would like to have you present to their class on your experience of starting a new business.

3. **Collaborative Marketing** – Look for other businesses in related areas who would be good collaborative marketing partners. Maybe you share something in common, such as a group of retailers in a particular section of your town. Attract more customers to your door by collaborating to hold events, like a sidewalk sale or provide an offer to customers who buy something at two different stores in the area.

Let's say you are a house painter. Why not collaborate with real estate agents. They can refer customers who need some home improvements before listing their home for sale and you may have customers who are looking to sell their homes. It takes no more effort than a discussion and a handshake with someone you already know.

4. **Social Media** – This topic fills books with ideas and tips on how to maximize the impact of on-line networking for the benefit of your business. The advantage of social media is that your audience reach is much larger than traditional networking, significantly larger. With sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, you can do a lot of this networking yourself. Facebook, of course, is particularly relevant to businesses that interact with consumers. Often, you get such broad exposure just by posting something that 3 of your Facebook friends 'like'. They, in turn, have many friends who now see that they have 'liked' your post, and so on. What reach! And, it only takes one great post to reach such a large audience.

LinkedIn is more of a tool for professional contacts and useful for organizations that focus on businesses as their customers. Let's not leave out other sites that can be appealing for networking your business like Pinterest, Google+, . . .

Let's not forget email marketing! You can do it with your own lists but there are companies that provide the framework for email marketing are very good at providing small businesses like yours with hints and tips on how to effectively use their products. They provide useful functionality like allowing customers to unsubscribe easily and provide you with data on how many people opened your email, etc. Start now to get the email addresses of all of your prospects and customers so that you can offer them information on your products and services, advice on how to use them properly or make them aware of special offers. These companies often have relationships with Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations to offer lower costs to their members. Check with your Chamber.

5. **Customer Referrals** – I saved the best for last. You know that the best way to find your next customer is to do a great job for the ones you already have. First, they become repeat customers. Secondly, people who are delighted with you are more than willing to recommend you to their connections if you ask them for those recommendations. Simply ask if they would be a reference. If yes, ask if they know of anyone else who could use your service or ask them to let others know that you did a great job. You know that if a referral gets your foot in the door of a new prospect, the deal is almost done. You just have to close it.

There you have it, five no-cost/low-cost ideas for marketing your new small business. None of them are really difficult to do. The difficult part is giving your attention to following thru on them. You know by now that starting and running a small business is not an easy thing to do. You know that your personal finances are invested in it. Your work life and your personal life are totally invested in it. Using these inexpensive ways to market your new business will help you get the returns you have hoped for.

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