



Getting the Most out of Your Marketing Materials

If you haven't reviewed your promotional materials for a while, now is a good time to do so.

But before you begin, let's add a penny-pinching marketing note of realistic caution here: If the only thing wrong with your material is that you're getting tired of using the same brochure, letterhead, or ad, you cannot justify dumping it and starting over – certainly not if you're a savvy penny-pinching marketer!

Besides, it just could be that the same piece you are tired of is really doing the job for you. Remember, this may well be the first time your prospect has seen it.

So dig out all those materials you've been using to represent you to the outside world – your clients, prospects, and those in a position to refer business to you. Take a look at the brochures, letterhead, envelopes, post cards, business cards, newsletters, flyers, mailers, promotional letters – the works, even if you're not using some of them now. Lay them all out in front of you.

- **Do they have a "family look"?** Have you used a consistent visual theme? Each piece should carry a unifying element – perhaps your logo, or photo, or slogan. If you're using color, the color scheme should remain consistent from one piece to the next.
- **Does the "look" convey the image you want to present today?** It is not necessary, nor is it necessarily desirable, to look expensive, unless you're building an upscale position for

your product or service. If you are, then of course your materials must look upscale. Other clients, who position themselves in a "bargain" or low-cost position, have told me they work against themselves by looking too high class. Most of us will choose a middle ground.

- **Is the message consistent from one piece to the next?** Are you presenting your product or service consistently? Will your readers, listeners, or viewers get the same message from each piece, or will they be confused about who you are, what you do, why they need what you offer, and what they should do about it?

Now that you've completed your first scan, let's look at some of the harder questions. Ask yourself:

1. How well is each piece doing its job? Piece by piece, what works best?

How about that letterhead, and your business cards are they helping you sell your product or service? How could they work harder? Could you add a list of products or services? Should your theme, or positioning statement be included?

Are you making it easy for your prospect or customer to find you? Do you show your FAX number? Need an email address, or a toll-free telephone number? How do your customers look for you? How do they want to do business? How can you make it easier for them?

What about your other materials – the brochures, newsletters, mailers, post cards, flyers, ads. Does each provide something of value for your reader/viewer/listener? Have you given them a reason to keep your material at hand?

Could you present benefits in a more compelling way?

Does each piece spell out strong benefits that really matter to your prospect – or, have you used one or more of these pieces to focus solely on "how great thou art"? Remember – every one of us acts in enlightened self-interest. How enlightening are your materials?

2. What pieces can you do without? As you consider this one, assess the type of business that you most want. Usually, this is the business that is most profitable for you, assuming there is potentially enough of it. Refer back to your plan. Where is new business most likely to come from? What kind of new business do you really want? How much new business can you handle? Do you want to attract?

With this in mind, what kinds of materials do you need to attract this business? A brochure – print, or electronic? A flyer? A merchandising letter? A new business card that could double as a "mini-brochure"? A video? An audio tape? Certainly an email address. A Website?

Now you're ready for the recycling bin! But before you throw out the old materials, is there an appropriate way you could use them? Would they be useful as handouts at a trade show? On your counter? Envelope stuffers? For a final "close out" mailing? Could you update them with a rubber stamp or sticker? Or overprint them? Or cut out and use a portion?

3. What materials do you really need?

Most often the same piece can be – and really should be – used in several ways. You can waste a lot of good hard cash by producing too much, or too many different pieces. Include on your list the materials you already have.

4. Plan how each piece will be used. The more "bites you can get out of the apple," the more useful, and cost-effective, the piece will be. So, how many ways can you think of to use each piece? List each way the piece will be used, the target audience for each, what results are expected, and how they will be measured.

And then follow up. Track how hard each piece is working for you. Conduct regular audits on your materials, and you've become a real penny-pinching marketer—spending less, and selling more.