

Guide to Marketing and Communication Tools

Overview

It seems obvious that getting more customers paying a higher price will have a positive impact on your business performance but things are never that simple. Properly understanding your customers, how and where they want to buy from you and at what price is the key to improving your revenue.

Once you've clearly identified your customers you should spend time writing a marketing plan to help you think about how you will reach your target market. In order to sell your product or service you need to consider which route to market will be the best for your business. You might, for example, sell directly, online or through a wholesaler or you might need a combination of these. Each route will have different costs and practical implications that you will need to build into your marketing plan.

Perhaps most of all you should remember that every time you or any of your employees speak to someone outside of your company about your business you are involved in marketing – what a great opportunity!

There are many tools available to communication about your business, and it is important that you choose the right tools to target the right customers at the right time and at the right cost. It is also essential to monitor how your customers hear about you and for you to review your marketing and communications methods on a regular basis to ensure that you get a return on your investment.

Some of the tools you may wish to consider using include:

Brand development

It is important to ensure that your brand identity and logo encompass and communicate your business values to your customers. Your brand will create your business reputation and can also make your business stand out from the competition, so it is important that you get it right from the very start. You should budget for brand development and speak to a variety of advertising agencies to find the right one for you.

Networking

Developing relationships with other businesses and individuals is of paramount importance to your business. You may wish to explore being a member of a business networking group or join a membership organisation like the Chamber of Commerce or The Institute of Directors. Jersey Business organises a series of networking events throughout the year. To be kept up-to-date, we suggest you register your details on our mailing list which you can do through our website.

Direct marketing

Direct marketing is about making direct contact with existing and potential customers enabling you to give a personalised message to particular customer groups. Direct marketing can be cost effective and extremely powerful at generating sales, so it is ideal for small businesses.

Direct marketing uses a variety of different methods. Direct mail, mailshots and leafleting have traditionally been used by companies but you should also think about using telephone marketing, email and texting which offer opportunities to reach your target market in a different way. Whichever method you use it is important to ensure that you keep your message clear and concise for maximum effect.

Public relations (PR)

Public relations (PR) is the relationship your business has with the public and is developed by working with the press and other media outlets to create positive awareness of your business. Favourable media coverage, such as

reports, reviews and articles, is very valuable because PR is often seen as being more credible than advertising. To make the most of your PR campaign your business needs to be ready for the extra interest and sales good publicity will bring but you should also have a mechanism for handling publicity or feedback that is not so favourable.

Website

All businesses can benefit from having an accessible and easy to use web presence. For this to be most effective you need to decide what you want your website to deliver for your business, for example, you might want to build brand awareness, sell directly to customers or improve customer support. Once you have decided what you need your website to achieve you will be able to develop the structure and content for it. You will probably need to work with a web development company to create the structure of your site and possibly a marketing/ design agency to help with the content.

Social marketing

Social media, both for advertising and for engagement with your customers, has become a very important communications tool for businesses. Social media platforms you may wish to consider using include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr and Trip Advisor. Although it is relatively easy to set up a social media presence it can be tricky to manage as all these platforms need to be regularly refreshed with new and interesting content. You will also need to consider how you will separate personal and business social media activity particularly if you or your employees are already active on these platforms.

Conferences and exhibitions

Conferences and exhibitions are a good way of getting face-to-face with your customer in an environment where they have purposely attended in order to meet new suppliers. These events come in all shapes and sizes but you will find that there are one or two that are particularly relevant to your market or industry. Exhibitions are usually either trade fairs or consumer shows. People attending trade fairs are usually key buyers or decision makers in

businesses and are often there to conclude business. Consumer shows in contrast are more of a showcase where you can market your product or service and find out more about your customers and their needs. Conferences and exhibitions can be costly to attend to it is important to prepare beforehand and follow up afterwards with the people you meet.

Advertising

Advertising is paid-for promotion that allows you to clearly communicate your marketing message to your chosen market. There are many advertising mediums which you might wish to consider using and your choice will depend on what message you want to deliver so look for publications and other media that targeted at your specific market. The main advertising mediums are television, radio, magazines, newspapers, the internet, and billboards. Make sure you measure the effectiveness of your advertising because it can become very costly if it is not ultimately generating sales.