

Inbound and Outbound Marketing —Making the Connection

By Jenny Kaplan

Running a business is not for the meek. If anyone tells you being an entrepreneur, small business owner or even in upper management is anything less than an unbelievably challenging and daunting task, you have my permission to call them a bold-faced liar! It's a relentless, up at dawn, burning the midnight oil and deeply devoted endeavor to run a successful business—and yet we love it, don't we? And the payoff for all our efforts is, *yes*, if you "work it," they will come.

The trick is to know how to cover all your bases when it comes to public relations and marketing. I propose that, to keep a steady flow of business in the door, a substantial and equal amount of attention must be paid to both sides of what we call inbound and outbound marketing. In the heat of running a business, actually promoting it is often one of the first tasks cast aside. Unfortunately, this usually goes unnoticed until too late, when your pipeline of incoming business has dried up. For those who fluctuate between thinking they either don't have time because they're already too busy or don't have funds to spare because they're not busy enough, I lovingly say: You must always find a way and plan to actively promote your business in some form or another.

When asked why he continued to promote his popular product so heavily when it was already so well known, William Wrigley of the Wrigley Gum empire answered, "A plane goes faster than 300 miles per hour. Why doesn't the pilot just turn off the engines and let the plane fly us home on its own momentum?"

The great news and the exciting question we get to ponder is the "how." How shall I promote my business today, this week, this month, quarter and so on? You get to choose and, I assure you, they don't all cost an arm and a leg. In a world where we're constantly inundated with ideas about what marketing we need or what we should do, I say boldly explore the many options available to you and pick some based on what resonates and works for your sector specifically. Choose based on what's going on around you economically, both in your world and in your customers' world.

There's an inequity in the way businesses are promoting themselves. We've all been infatuated with the online world and, while I too adore and am in awe of its power, we need to remember our roots and some old-school basics of marketing, creating the perfect combination (for you) of old and new school. For example, some spend thousands of dollars building a fabulous website without a strategic plan for announcing and promoting its existence. I find this a bit ridiculous. Or investing time and hence money on a Facebook presence with no plan as to how you'll build an audience for it beyond your 100 best friends or return on investment for your efforts. Once you do get folks to notice you online, what will they be reading? Will you have captivating, valuable content that keeps them coming back to you again and again as the expert? I humbly offer you my short list of top ways to promote your business.

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Outbound

1. Build your database. Seems boring, right? Not once you see that growing and mining your database is a major lifeline for bringing in new and repeat business.

2. Build a schmooze schedule. To whom, how often and why are you personally reaching out? Choose specific contacts who can bring you the most exciting ideas, networking opportunities and connections.

3. Brand yourself. Know why you're the expert at what you do, and incorporate that story and message into all your materials, messages and outreach.

4. Write press releases. They should go out every 45 days. Think "newsworthy."

5. Use the media. Third-party earned media is one of the most powerful and yet underutilized tools in business promotion. Use the media to talk directly to your clients via articles, interviews,

mentions in newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, newsletters, online and the like.

Inbound

1. Improve your website. Maintain an optimized site. Offer fresh, value-based content and a clear message with your brand exemplified.

2. Blog, blog, blog! Aim for twice per week. Each time you create new content, you're providing search engines opportunities to find and catalog your site.

3. Create a social media campaign. What, where and how often will you contribute to the online community?

4. Craft quality online content. Be of service to your readers and followers.

5. Create "authentic" backlinks. These incoming links from other websites are one of the most powerful ways to drive traffic to your site and blog. High-quality inbound links account for a very large part of a page's search ranking. High quality means that the page has an equal or higher page rank. Finding a page with quality-related content will serve that purpose.

Those are just some of my favorites, and there are many other ways to market your message, both online and off. The real genius is in opting for the right marketing to fit your specific needs versus just jumping on whatever bandwagon is most popular at the moment. To do this, it helps to take a step back, take a look at the big picture and thoroughly consider all the options available to you. Make a blueprint for success to reach each and every one of your business dreams and goals.

Jenny Kaplan focuses on strategic PR campaigns. Her company, JKaplan Communications, has garnered celebrated results for a wide variety of businesses. Her years of diverse experience in executive search, publishing and the media are her edge in the challenging and multifaceted world of public relations. Learn more at www.GetNoticedPR.com or call (707) 578-1336.

