

BUILD YOUR MARKETING MACHINE IN 7 STEPS!



Contents

Build your marketing machine	1
HMRC Relaxes RTI Rule	2
Tax news	2
New residency rules	3
Building a pricing strategy	3
Got a PR strategy?	4

Whatever the size of your business, now is the time to really market yourself. Marketing is so important right now – we are living in a very competitive environment, new products and services are constantly being developed and all businesses need to make sure they are up with, and preferably, ahead of the competition.

Many businesses put marketing barriers up: I don't have time, customer service comes first, I have family commitments and that's not what I do! If you have a clear focus that you want to grow your business then you need to make some time to action your plans. Here's what the most successful businesses do:

1. Get focus – set targets for growth over the next 12, 24 and 36 months.
2. Appoint a full time or part time marketing person or create some time to do the marketing yourself. It's not going to happen by itself!
3. Get a marketing plan to meet your growth objectives. Ask yourself:
 - What do we need to do to keep our existing customers coming back?
 - How do we sell them additional products and/or services?
 - How do we get them to buy more often from us?
 - How do we get them to refer us new customers?
 - What do we need to do to let potential customers know we exist and that we have products/services they may like?
 - How do we differentiate ourselves from similar businesses?
 - Have we got a database of existing and potential customers? If we have, sending letters, emails and offers becomes a lot easier
4. Write down your plan – then decide how you are going to action it. How are you going to do it? What marketing materials do you need?
5. Gather your marketing materials together:
 - Develop a brochure of products / services information
 - Keep up to date information on your website
 - Consider letters, postcards and emails
6. Adopt a distribution plan. Decide when and how you will let existing and potential customers know you are here and what offers and products /services you have.
7. Manage Feedback - review how effective your marketing activities have been. Be flexible and be prepared to try out different ways of marketing.

In conclusion, if you want to grow your business, invest in your marketing activities. Create time or hire someone to make it happen. Remember: wishful thinking is not an option!

HMRC Relaxes RTI Rule



Businesses with fewer than 50 employees can benefit from a temporary relaxation of the Real Time Information (RTI) reporting arrangements. Until 5 October 2013, employers with fewer than 50 employees who pay their staff weekly or more regularly and find it difficult to report at the time of payment may now send information by the date of their regular payroll, but no later than the end of the tax month (which of course is the 5th of the month).

HMRC has confirmed that for 2012/13, penalties will not be applied for inaccuracies found within the in-year Full Payment Submission (FPS). However, they may be charged after the end of the tax year based on the final FPS for the year.

“Penalties may also apply for inaccuracies found within the in-year returns for the 2013/14 tax year, using existing criteria. From 6 April 2014 there will be new late filing and late payment penalties.

100% TAX WRITE-OFF ON MACHINERY, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

Tax allowances rise to £250,000 as the new and temporary annual amount you can spend in your business on machinery, furniture and the like, and get full tax write-off in the year.

Most businesses do not spend anything like that amount in a year, but even so you have to be very careful on the timing of capital expenditure as there are some complicated rules covering the switch from an annual limit of £25,000 to the new £250,000.

Contact us if you are thinking of investing in capital expenditure.



OPTION FOR SMALL BUSINESS TO BE TAXED ON CASH RECEIVED LESS CASH SPENT

This novel idea is going ahead from April 2013, and is available to sole traders and general partnerships with annual turnover less than £77,000.



It may sound an attractive option but there are plenty of issues to consider before deciding whether or not it is right for you. The price for a degree of simplicity is that many tax allowances on business expenses will be restricted.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT TAX RELIEF

This has been around for several years, but never has the scope been greater for getting enhanced tax relief where a limited company incurs expenditure which qualifies for R & D relief. For every £1,000 spent you get corporation tax relief as if you had spent £2,250. Add to that the fact that HMRC react positively to claims made and you have an unusually attractive regime you may be able to use. Contact us – we may be able to help!

MAIN TAX EVENTS FOR MARCH – APRIL 2013

Date	What's Due
1 March	Corporation tax for year to 31/5/12
19 March	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 5/3/13 (due 22 March if you pay electronically)
1 April	Corporation tax for year to 30/6/12
5 April	End of tax year 2012/13; new tax year 2013/14 starts 6 April
19 April	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 5/4/13 (due 22 April if you pay electronically)



If you plan to leave the UK (permanently or for a limited period), or indeed you are coming to live in the UK, your exposure to UK tax is very much based on your tax status as being either resident or not resident.

At last from 6 April 2013 there will be a test laid down by tax law, rather than having to rely on HMRC practice. What the new law means is that in any circumstances it should be possible to determine your tax status from the answers to a list of questions.

In many cases if you leave the UK the most important point will be the length of your visits to the UK. That in turn depends on what ties you will still have with the UK, and it is true to say that most people will potentially have a better deal than under the previous practice. The new law does have some important changes to the original proposals announced some time ago.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDING A PRICING STRATEGY

A good pricing strategy can make or break a business. If you are perceived as being too expensive and offering bad value for money, your sales will suffer. Equally, if you are perceived as being too cheap, you may lose out in revenue terms compared to competitors who are perceived as having desirable “premium” products or services.

Below are some factors to consider when creating a pricing strategy for your business:

Economics of One Unit

Simply put, you need to know what it costs you to produce one unit of your product or service. If you sell cupcakes you should have a full understanding of what it costs you to make one cupcake. If you sell accounting services, you need to understand how much it costs you to produce one tax return.



Overheads

Direct costs are one thing. You also need to factor in your overhead costs. These costs may include renting premises, IT, equipment, light and heat. On top of this you will have staff costs, tax and other costs associated with being in business.

Competitor Pricing

You can only estimate your competitors’ levels of overheads. Some competitors may price low and push for higher volumes of sales. Others may price higher, focus on offering more quality and therefore provide more “perceived value” to their customers but they may not be able to deliver the same volume of product/service.

Quality

Having a high-quality product or service goes without saying. Even if you justify charging more for your products or services, if the quality is no good you will be inundated with returns, complaints, and negative reviews.

Benefits to the Customer

The benefits a consumer can expect to receive as a result of purchasing from your business must be clear and measurable. Having a good understanding of your customers’ needs and how your products or services offer a solution can go a very long way in helping you to set pricing. The more a customer needs your product or service the more you can charge but make sure that you don’t price yourself out of the market. Unless your firm offers unique and tangible benefits which your competitors cannot offer, you really can’t justify being the most expensive in the market.

GOT A PR STRATEGY?



No matter how big or small your business you need a PR strategy. Even the smallest start up business can have a simple PR strategy which uses local press, social networking and email marketing to raise the profile of the firm with very little financial cost.

Identify your target market

To begin with you must identify your target market – who are you trying to reach, why are you reaching out to them and what is the message? Remember – if nobody knows who you are and what you do, the sales calls will not come. PR is not sales so plugging products will not suffice. Instead focus on producing a newsworthy story such as “local business creates new jobs” or “national firm expands into new overseas markets”. Write stories that you would be interested in reading if you were to see the headline in the newspaper or online.

Select the appropriate media

If your potential customers are generally online then there is little point in getting lots of press coverage in newspapers and magazines. Select the media that is most appropriate for your target audience. Identify the trade press titles that your customers read. If you don't have the answers to this already – ask your existing clients via a survey.

Set targets

Set targets for your PR campaigns. Whether that is to receive press coverage in one newspaper and once online each week or whether you want to make the national news once a month, set realistic, achievable targets.

Recycle content

If you send a press release out to a trade journal, business magazine or newspaper, make sure you recycle that content. Once it has been published you can then put a copy of the news article up on your website, tweet a link to the story, add a status update on LinkedIn and even email a copy out to your clients and prospects. Aim to use each piece of press coverage at least twice – after all there is no point in re-inventing the wheel in order to gain additional PR.



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