

## Tricks of the Trade: the Golden Rules of Marketing

Businesses may market themselves for many different reasons, but the objectives generally centre around two things:

1. To get their name known - to “build their brand” - in a certain location, in a particular industry or for a specific product or service.
2. To generate sales leads.

I think of marketing as being the oil in the engine. You may have a straight six, turbo charged, eight litre engine but it'll go nowhere without oil. Your business may have a fantastic product that people really need, but they won't buy it if they don't know about it.

### How to use the Golden Rules

These are No Nonsense's Golden Rules of Marketing. They may look unremarkable and seem to be more a case of common sense. Good! That's the whole idea. (And you know what they say about common sense: it aint that common).

You can use the Golden Rules in two ways:

1. To see how well your existing marketing measures up. Are you already doing all these things? If you are, great! If not, perhaps it will spark some ideas and insights.
2. To plan the marketing for something new: a new business, a new product/service, a new location, etc.

### Summary of the Golden Rules

1. Never do nothing. Your competitors will capitalise on your deafening silence.
2. Plan your campaign first and include at least three separate activities running at the same time.
3. Cost the campaign and find out what results you need to break even.
4. Try to reach your potential customers as directly as possible.
5. Measure each marketing activity to help decide which one works best.
6. Keep your marketing activities going (unless your measurement shows it's not working and you can't fix it).

Now we can explore the Golden Rules in more detail:

#### Rule #1: Never do nothing

People have very short memories. You have to keep reminding them that you're around and would like to be able to do business with them. When the name of your business is established, fewer reminders are needed, but you should never, *ever* stop marketing your business.

This is a classic mistake and the reason behind the majority of business failures. Even when you're busy, keep promoting your business. If your business is seasonal, make sure your marketing ramps up *before* the trade falls off.

And remember, people are fickle. They will try things simply because they are new or because a name stuck in their head. If they don't hear from you for a while, they start to think you're no longer around and your business will go to a competitor.

If you constantly market your business, you will stay in your customers' minds and make it much more difficult for competitors to sneak in.

#### Rule #2: Plan your campaign with at least three simultaneous activities

Planning your marketing is covered in more detail in a separate Tricks of the Trade document (see the “Perfect Planning” page on the website). It starts with knowing who your customers are, and to do that I would like you to answer some basic questions about them:

1. **Who** are your customers?
2. **What** do they want from your business?
3. **Where** can you find them?

4. **When** would they buy from you?
5. **Why** would they buy from you and not someone else?
6. **How** do they want to buy from you, practically?

If you have more than one type of customer, complete the profile for each type. Comparing the similarities and differences between them can sometimes be an eye opener.

Now you know who they are, group them into these three levels:

1. **Level 3:** every possible customer you can think of.
2. **Level 2:** people who are highly likely to buy from you, groups and communities with a genuine interest in your product/service.
3. **Level 1:** people who will definitely buy from you, and *don't forget* your existing customers.

To put together a marketing plan that's going to work, you need a marketing activity aimed at each level. For example: PR may be a good choice for level 3; direct mail may be a good choice for level 2; and a referral scheme may be a good choice for level 1. The important thing to remember is that the mix of activities will vary from business to business - which is why having your own marketing plan is vital to your business.

### **Rule #3: Cost the campaign to find out your break even point**

Strictly speaking, this is still part of the planning process. You may identify the perfect mix of marketing activities only to find it's three times your budget, in which case, time to think again!

When you're costing the activities, make sure you're planning at least a six month campaign, if not 12 months. Marketing is at its most effective when it's consistent and sustained. That way, you gain *and secure* a place in the mind of your customers and potential customers. Planning a sustained campaign that you can confidently fund for a year will give better results than a one hit wonder that's gone in a month.

Marketing to generate leads must always pay for itself, so when you're costing your campaign, work out how many widgets you'll have to sell to cover those costs. The answer will be specific to *your* business so you should get a good idea of how realistic the campaign is. For example, a kitchen designer may only need one or two extra orders per year to cover the costs of his marketing. An internet based wholesaler may need to sell 10,000 more bottles of detergent. My point is that as the *owner* of the business, you'll know whether the break even point is realistic, and that's a good test of the validity of your plan.

### **Rule #4: Try to reach your customers as directly as possible**

I know that sounds like stating the very, very obvious, but it's something which is so often missed that I consider it worthy of Golden Rule status. Let me ask you a question:

Q: Which group of people are most likely to bring you more business?

A: Your customers.

Be honest: would you have said that? How many businesses make it easy for their customers to recommend them, or even have a way to thank them when they do? Hardly any. It's such a simple marketing tool yet it's almost always overlooked. If this applies to you, I hope you'll rectify the situation very soon: you'll reap the rewards very soon too.

Trying to reach your customers as directly as possible has other significant benefits:

1. It targets the activity more closely to the most likely buyers.
2. It cuts costs by reducing wastage.
3. It increases success rates.
4. It makes activities easier to measure.

### **Rule #5: Measure each marketing activity to see which one works best**

Measuring the success of marketing campaigns is not an exact science, unfortunately. If most customers said they'd seen your leaflet, they probably also saw an article in the paper months ago or heard about you from a friend. However, that is no excuse for trying to ascertain the results of individual marketing activities to work out which ones are most effective.

To measure your marketing as well as possible, there are four main things to get right:

1. If you can, put some kind of tracking code on any outbound materials such as leaflets, adverts or letters.
2. Make sure all your customer-facing personnel know what marketing has been going on in the last 2 - 3 months.
3. Make sure you find out what prompted every inbound enquiry - whether from an existing customer or a new one.
4. Log the results centrally and monitor them regularly to feed back into your marketing plan.

Do remember that you need at least three activities aimed at levels 1, 2 and 3 of your possible buyers to reap the rewards of a successful marketing plan. As you measure activities over time, you can decide which are most effective, which are most *cost* effective, refine your plan and hone your budget.

#### **Rule #6: Keep your marketing activities going**

“... unless your measurement shows an activity is not working and you can’t fix it” is the caveat to that statement. Remember rule #1: never do nothing. I can’t stress that enough! However, being practical, some marketing activities will be more successful than others and a large element in their success is the right timing.

Before you decide to discontinue an activity, try to work out why it isn’t being as successful as you’d hoped. Did you hope for too much? Did competitor steal your limelight at the time? What do your customers think of it? (And if you don’t know, ask some of them to find out!). It may be possible to make small alterations and get a much better result.

On the other hand, if you’ve tried everything (and consulted a marketing expert...), maybe a change is needed. Before you discontinue one activity, plan its successor so that it can start seamlessly otherwise you’ll have a gap that could adversely impact your business further down the line.

#### **For more information**

For more information on the “Keep It Simple, Stupid” approach to marketing, contact Penny Lines at No Nonsense Marketing on 01625 410681 / 07932 158845, by email at [penny@no-nonsense-marketing.co.uk](mailto:penny@no-nonsense-marketing.co.uk) or via the enquiry form on the contact page of the website at [www.no-nonsense-marketing.co.uk](http://www.no-nonsense-marketing.co.uk).

Wishing you all the best in your marketing - and no nonsense!