



Re-Think Your Marketing Efforts: New Ideas to Promote Your Family Business

Kelly Borth of GREENCREST,
Bryan Huber of huber+co. interactive,
Jason Mlicki of Mlicki,
Dave Keller of Triad,
Amy Marshall of Webbed Marketing

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For this case study five representatives from Central Ohio advertising and marketing agencies joined together to present new and affordable marketing ideas to family business owners. The local experts included: Kelly Borth of GREENCREST, Bryan Huber of huber+co. interactive, Jason Mlicki of Mlicki, Dave Keller of Triad, and Amy Marshall of Webbed Marketing. The panel was moderated by Rick Miller of Rick Miller Communications.

The panelists encouraged family business leaders to consider the following strategies:

Staff Involvement

According to Jason Mlicki of Mlicki, a 2008 Gallup Employment Study reported that only 20% of employees are actively engaged at work, 55% are just going through the motions, and 20% are actively disengaged. Reducing the number of disengaged employees should be a goal of every family business because employees play a crucial role in marketing and promoting that business. By using an inexpensive online tool such as Survey Monkey, owners can survey employees to better understand how they feel about the business and whether or not they understand the company's brand promise. Using this information, owners can and should address gaps between their vision for the company and their employee's perceptions of that vision. Mlicki also mentioned that another tactic to engage employees is to update the work environment and incorporate your brand into your office space by displaying brand graphics and videos -- something that can be done with minimal expense. The goal is to move your employees into the "actively engaged" category so they are good ambassadors of your business.

Now is an ideal time to leverage the fact that you are a family-owned business. The public's trust has been shifting and has now changed. Until recently, many consumers trusted brands over companies, but now they are going back to trusting the company and what it stands for. This is an opportunity for family businesses to capitalize on their values and their place in the community.

Social Media

You can use social media and networking to make your family business more efficient believes Amy Marshall of Webbed Marketing. The feedback that you previously paid to get from a focus

group can now be gained for free online. By listening to what people are saying on their blogs, in their tweets and in other forms of social media business leaders can get great feedback on their products or services. Business owners also have the opportunity to quickly respond to positive or negative feedback.

Some social media tools that can be of assistance to business leaders:

- Tweetbeep.com – This tool allows you to set up alerts that will be e-mailed to you when key words that are of interest to your company are used on Twitter.
- www.search.twitter.com – You can search Twitter for relevant content using keywords, demographics, and geographic locations.
- Twellow.com – This is a directory by category of all of the groups available on Twitter.
- Google Search – You can search particular sites (for example, site:facebook.com or site:linkedin.com) for keywords in the profiles of people using it. It will tell you how many people have that keyword in their profile. Be sure to put phrases in quotes, like "Conway Family Business Center", to capture the information you need.
- Google Alerts – You set up alerts that generate an e-mail to you each time a keyword that you've requested is used on the Internet.
- Social Media Aggregator – There are a few tools out there that aggregate social media sites by topics. These tools can help monitor conversations going on in your industry.
- Google Blog Search – This tool searches for your keywords on blog pages.
- Google Analytics – This is a free tool available from Google to add to any website to track and monitor traffic patterns and visitor behavior. This is a MUST-HAVE tool for every Web site to be successful.

Web sites

It also is important to maximize the usefulness of your Web site so it works harder for your business. When you design your Web site or update it you want to keep your Internet strategy in mind and develop content that reflects your brand and helps you accomplish your marketing goals. Bryan Huber, of [huber+co. interactive](http://huber+co.interactive), stressed that above all when developing your Web site you want to create content that engages the user. If users are not engaged or cannot access the information they need easily they will move on to another site that is more appealing and easier to navigate.

Note: Many companies like to say that people are their primary assets but only show their products on their Web site. Be sure to include staff and client testimonials as part of your Web site and video communications.

12 Touches

A sales strategy and a marketing strategy are two different strategies that must work together in order for a family business to be successful. The number of times that you must engage a prospective customer before getting a sale is increasing due to the myriad of messages consumers are bombarded with each day. Dave Keller of Triad recommended a 12-touch program that can help business owners break through the clutter. By contacting prospective customers 12 different times through various approaches business owners will be able to build a relationship and eventually a sale with prospective clients. The 12 contacts can be letters, post cards, e-mail, e-newsletters, etc. Video also is a great way to connect with prospective clients and isn't expensive, yet many business owners have not yet figured out how to incorporate it into their marketing strategy. Once created, you can use video in a variety of ways, including DVDs, posting it to YouTube or Facebook, adding it to your Web site, or using it at trade shows to provide testimonials about your product or service.

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Turn Lost Opportunity Cost Into New Business Opportunity

"The fact that most businesses have competition creates an imperative for businesses to market in order to create customers," said Kelly Borth of GREENCREST. It is the CEO's job to define the company's strategic position and research has proven that the three leading companies in any industry are more profitable and attribute 80% of the company's success to strategic direction. Lack of a clear strategy comes at a high price. The result is that companies essentially waste the money they spend on marketing, which equates to a lost opportunity cost. And, if there is no distinguishable advantage to choosing a company over a competitor, the only deciding factor will be price.

So, how do you start?

1. Begin by listening to your customers.
2. Understand the game first and then determine your game plan and position on the field: Study the competition, trends, available market share, opportunities to grow business with existing customers, find an underserved area in the marketplace.
3. Find your company's unique voice or position and build a marketing strategy around leveraging that uniqueness; once this is done, determine tactically how to reach the market.
4. Brand first: in other words get ready. Plan second: you need to determine who you are aiming to reach. These steps are necessary to ignite your business: Fire your message to the marketplace.

The return on investment will be realized in a very short period of time in a number of ways:

- Strategic direction removes the guess work which translates to less wasted marketing budget spend
- A voice of differentiation will get heard and will open up selling opportunities
- Knowing what it takes to lead the market with your differentiation and creating a game plan provides sharp focus; that focus will guarantee you hit more bulls eyes

Select Questions:

Q: How do I use social media in my business?

A: Start by using it to listen to what people are saying about your brand, your company and your industry. Then incorporate it into your traditional marketing tactics. Social media is an additional tool, not something to replace what you're already doing. You also can repackage content for different sources. The same information you're using in a press release or a print newsletter can be re-written for a blog, for Twitter, for Facebook, to be sent in an e-mail or e-newsletter, or for your Web site

Q: What key elements do I need to have on my Web site to make it effective?

A: Make your site as easy to use and navigate as possible to encourage visitors to your site to stay there longer and to come back often. It should be easy to figure out who you are, what you do and what you're selling. Additionally, be sure to place any elements where you want visitors to interact with your site or give you information in an obvious place.

Q: If you have a Web site then why use Facebook?

A: Facebook can be a way to drive more traffic to your Web site. It gives you an identity and an image in the Facebook community but also creates a connection back to your Web site.

Presentation Materials Available

Members may obtain a copy power point presentations used during this program by visiting the Members Only section our website at www.familybusinesscenter.com.

Contact information for the panelists and moderator:

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