

7 Low-Cost Tips to Boost Business

Growing your business doesn't have to be difficult or expensive. Here are some simple ideas designed to help you increase your sales and profit, without draining your budget.

Focus your efforts on a small target

If you're trying to target everybody in your area, then the chances are, you're not targeting anybody.

Your target market must be small enough or somehow "chunked down" so that the resources you can and will commit can have big impact. It makes no sense to spit into the ocean but that's precisely what many cleaners do with far-reaching newspaper ad, inserts and co-op mailings.

The "big fish in the small pond" approach is best for anybody operating with limited resources. And who's not now-a-days?

When a cleaner describes his market as being 5 to 6 miles in radius, I know it's too broad and he's doomed to failure, if for no other reason than the disparity between his resources and what it will take to have any measurable impact on a target market of that size.

Begin an active networking program

Networking is a great way to get your message out to a large number of people, for free. It's been said that the average person knows 250 other people. In that case, you can spread the word about your business pretty quickly.

Go to your local Chamber of Commerce meetings. Shake hands at business functions. Exchange business cards with associates you see in stores, churches and at community events.

Write tips articles

Newspapers and other publications are always looking for helpful tips articles that would be of benefit to their readers. Why not submit simple, problem/solution type articles related to drycleaning and laundry? You can certainly get plenty of information from your trade association but most of your material will probably come from everyday experiences in the plant and these are the types of experiences that make the best reading anyway.

Simply state the problem, and then share some insightful tips that can help to solve that problem.

Always include information at the end of your articles so that people will know how to contact you to receive more information about your services. With some luck you could be a regular contributor to the paper and become well known throughout the community.

Be persistent

When it comes to increasing your sales and profit, persistence is power. But many cleaners never achieve their full potential and some eventually fail simply because they don't follow-up long enough to produce results. In fact, most sales are made after the seventh or eighth contact, whereas a relatively small percentage of sales are actually made as a result of one contact.

Distribute informative literature

Make sure that you get a concise outline of your service benefits into the hands of your prospects. If people don't know what you have to offer, how can they make a decision to call on you when they need help?

Develop customer relationships

Take an interest in your prospects and customers. Send them helpful articles that you think would interest them. If you know of an event that your prospect or customer will be celebrating, such as an anniversary or birthday, send them a card or small gift. They will appreciate your generosity and will think of you when they need your service, or if they know someone else who may need your service.

Don't shoot blind... know your customer

When it comes to adding to your customer ranks through direct mail, at least half the battle is won through list selection. All the components of a mail campaign are important including the copy, message, offer and the creative aspects... but none are as vital as the list, itself.

Mediocre marketing aimed at a very selected target group will get superior results. Exceptional marketing aimed at a sloppily selected target market may, at best, deliver mediocre results. Selection is of key importance.

Any cleaner who embarks on a direct marketing campaign must first create a very, very detailed profile of their current typical customer and their ideally desired client. Your success at attracting or finding the ones you want depends on knowing what you are looking for.

Can you describe your "ideal customer" in detail?

Here's a quick little exercise to illustrate what I mean.

First, take a sheet of paper and write out the most detailed description you can of a TV character, such as Archie Bunker or Al Bundy or Jerry Seinfeld. Where does he live, how does he dress, what interests him? What are his likes and dislikes? What does he think about money, sex, etc.?

Fill out both sides of the page. When that's done, try and write out just as detailed a description of your customer. If you find it is easier to profile the TV character than it is your customer... that should tell you a lot. In the end, the more you know about your customer, the more you sell.