

# How to promote... on a shoestring

What are you doing right now to *make* your business grow?

Are you actively promoting your service or have you cut your advertising budget to the bone? Are you making things happen or are you buckled in for a bumpy ride and just hoping for the best?

A recent visitor to my website asked if I could suggest any low-cost or no cost ways to advertise his business. Of course, this is a concern, which is shared by many. With gasoline now at more than \$4 a gallon, countless cleaners are looking for any way possible to stretch their dollars, but the worst thing one can do is to stop advertising their business.

A number of years ago, I was invited to attend a seminar, which was hosted by my friend Murray Raphael. In a speech given to some 300 supermarket owners and managers, he presented a very simple success formula for getting more business and keeping it.

He referred to it as his secret "four"mula because it involved doing 4 things every day to increase success and improve business.

First, pick up the phone and call four people. Thank each of them for coming to your store and for using your service. Try to be specific during the conversation. If possible, make reference to the last order they picked up in terms of an item that was cleaned or an alteration that was performed. Ask if the work was done to their satisfaction and before hanging up tell them about other services they might benefit from. Don't forget to express your thanks and be sure to invite them to come back again soon.

The phone call, itself, costs very little. The biggest expense will be your time but if you do your homework first and plan your calls carefully the benefits you'll get from making personal contact will deliver huge rewards over time.

Second, if making a phone call sounds too difficult, how about writing four letters a day? Simply say the same thing as you would in the phone call... thanking them for their business and inviting them back to try another service they might benefit from.

The key to writing effective letters is to make them as personal as possible. That means actually putting pen to paper and composing a letter in your own handwriting. Again, be as specific as possible and to better connect with your recipient... use pronouns such as "you" and "your" throughout the note. It will make your message even more personal. Be sure to address the envelope by hand and use a stamp instead of an indicia or a postage metering system.

Don't be tempted to substitute an email in place of the handwritten letter. Emails simply don't have the same impact. That doesn't mean you can't send an email as well. Just don't use email instead of sending a letter.

Third, give out four business cards every day. Whenever you're going out of the store to meet people for the first time, write a little note on the back of the card telling them how much you enjoyed meeting them. This is especially applicable if you operate a pick-up and delivery service. Face to face contact is the most powerful means of contact there is but it can be made even more effective if you leave your calling card with a personal note attached.

Fourth, always ask for the order. Again, this applies primarily to outside sales such as pick-up and delivery, drapery cleaning and carpet service. Too many people in sales make presentations but fail to ask for the order. However, if you make your sales presentation to at least four people a day, over the course of a year you will have made over 1,400 contacts. If you are able to close at

least 10% of those you will make a lot more business than you would have had you not used this formula.

If you've read this far you may be thinking to yourself... "This is just common sense." And you're exactly right. It is just old-fashioned common sense but are you actually *doing* it?

There's a saying that goes, "Five frogs are on a log. Four decide to jump off. How many are left?" The answer is – five, because there's a difference between deciding and doing.

In order for this very simple success formula to work it must be implemented. There's a big difference between knowing about it and actually doing something with it. The reason this formula works so effectively is three-fold. It's targeted, it's personal and it is done consistently on a regular basis. Steady, personal communication with viable customers and prospects on a regular basis will yield huge rewards to your business over time.

Each of the components in Murray's secret "four"mula for success is either a no cost or at most a very low-cost means of customer contact and follow up. It's perfect for any cleaner who wants to promote... on a shoestring and get as much as he can for as little as possible.