

MARKETING COACHES OFFER HELP, EXPERTISE TO GROW BUSINESS

If you start thinking about your marketing objectives and budget when you see the local ad salesperson walking in the door or when sales aren't up to par, don't feel alone. For many entrepreneurs and small businesses, marketing is something that gets done "when there's time," but sporadic marketing leads to sporadic results.

Just as a business plan sets the trajectory for achieving business success, a well-executed marketing plan generates the *opportunity for sales success*. Consistent strategic marketing helps you create the right image with the right markets and stimulates on-going interest in your products or services.

Businesses look to marketing to help others understand who they are and what customers can expect from them. Marketing also is intended to drive sales, so it can issue a call for action: Act now to receive a free gift! Click through for a free analysis! Sale ends tomorrow!

But the best marketing plan in the world reaps no results if it is not implemented. That's where a coach can help. Over the past several years, a new coaching specialty has emerged that can give small businesses an affordable option for developing and implementing effective marketing programs.

This approach combines marketing consulting with ongoing coaching. A professional marketing plan is developed for the business with the expectation that the business, rather than an agency, will do the necessary work to carry out the plan. That's what makes it more affordable for small business owners who may not be able to pay high agency fees.

Knowing how easy it is for the press of day-to-day business to put marketing initiatives on the back burner, a coach works with the entrepreneur or business manager to provide added motivation and uncover solutions to obstacles that may impact his or her ability to implement the marketing programs.

For example, a coach can help clients set aside time in their schedules for marketing and manage the barrage of demands from customers, clients, employees or family members that so often consumes that time despite best intentions.

Marketing also can be very difficult for many people who grew up with the message that they should not “toot their own horn” or who lack the confidence in their ability to articulate their marketing messages. This discomfort can make it easy to avoid marketing by giving other tasks more priority.

One way coaches help clients break through these blocks is by providing a supportive environment for practicing “elevator speeches” or rehearsing effective conversation openers at networking events. Coaches also ensure that you are considering the big picture and have done your homework, enabling you to revise your plan in response inevitable market shifts such as changes in customers’ needs and competitors’ actions.

Most of the time, marketing coaches have a background in the field and also can shift into consultant mode to help when business owners need more information or help. They can do this at a fraction of the cost of hiring an agency to do marketing for you.

Sue Engelhart, of Sue Engelhart & Associates, is a public relations consultant and business coach who helps individuals and companies define and achieve their goals and business objectives through the use of coaching and communication tools. For more information, see www.sueengelhart.com or email Sue@sueengelhart.com.

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