

Creating Top-Of-Mind Awareness: Part One

By Rick Iacoboni

Webster's Dictionary defines the word "famous" as being "much talked about." In business we call this top-of-mind awareness. From a marketing standpoint, the key to increased sales is *creating* and *sustaining* top-of-mind awareness with both existing and prospective customers.

People are fickle. Even your best customers might be tempted to check out a competitor who did a better job than you in promoting their products or services. Don't get mad – get even! Make your company famous by launching your own top-of-mind awareness campaign.

This article - **Part One** - is for businesses which are starting their top-of-mind awareness campaigns from scratch. It presents the basics. **Part Two** describes in detail how to sustain top-of-mind awareness.

Three Rules:

- **Determine Budget:** Look ahead one year and establish what you can spend. That should be 5-7% of your sales, though this figure will vary by industry. Set some extra money aside should an unexpected "can't miss" opportunity fall into your lap. However, use it only for marketing-related activities, not towards paying bills.
- **Consistency:** A well thought-out campaign that keeps your message in front of your target accounts on a continual basis requires the "P" word: "planning." Without planning you will get the "F" word: "failure." A successful campaign will utilize different mediums, and always have several things in motion simultaneously.
- **Use Professionals:** Have your marketing materials written, designed and printed professionally. It's all about perception. Seek advice from marketing professionals who can step back and objectively assess your business. Remember the old adage: "You can only make a first impression one time." Hold off on a project until you can afford to do it the right way. You can't afford to do it wrong.

How To Create Top-of-Mind Awareness – The Basics

■ Tag Line (Elevator Speech)

The first step in branding your business is to create a memorable tagline (under seven words) that describes your business. It's most infamous use is in networking situations in response to "So, what do you do?" A memorable tag line keeps conversation flowing. Examples: Don't say "I sell life insurance." Say "I create peace of mind." Don't say "I am a realtor." Say "I improve lifestyles." Don't say "I'm a photographer." Say "I create memories." Your reply will usually generate this response – "How do you do that?" – and then it's off to the races. Include your tagline on all of your marketing materials – business cards, uniforms, signage, print ads, products, website, etc.

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■ Tri-Fold Brochure (with matching business cards)

Dollar for dollar, this is your best investment. It does the following:

- ▶ Attracts new customers
- ▶ Strengthens existing customer relationships
- ▶ Creates credibility that you are a “real”, established company
- ▶ Drives customers to your website
- ▶ Supports other marketing initiatives
- ▶ It can be used as a hand-out, leave-behind piece, direct mail piece or as part of a sales quote or presentation.

Use full color on both sides, 100# glossy stock with full bleeds. Use actual photos of your products and services.

■ Website

Here are five reasons why you should have a website:

- ▶ It enables your business to stay open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- ▶ It reaches out to prospective customers who are reaching out to you.
- ▶ It educates, informs, attracts new customers and even generates revenue.
- ▶ It positions you as a “real” established business.
- ▶ It is more affordable with a greater return on investment than a large phone book ad or print ad campaign.

For most small businesses, a 10 page website will suffice. You don't need flash or any sort of animation. In fact studies show that many people are annoyed by these sort of bells and whistles. When it comes to copy, remember less is more. Don't write a book. Just educate and inform. Use actual photos of your products and services. Include testimonials or case studies from satisfied customers. Before starting your website, check out your competitors' websites. Take the best ideas and combine them into your website. Always update your website at least every 30 days for optimum search engine optimization.

■ Customer Relations Program

There's no question that modern technology enables us to reach our customers more effectively than ever. However, nothing beats face-to-face contact when it comes to building relationships. Here are some ideas:

- ▶ Send thank you notes to all your customers throughout the year.
- ▶ Periodically take your customers to lunch or dinner to show your appreciation for their business.
- ▶ Send holiday cards and even give your best customers holiday gifts. Send them cards for special occasions or when somebody close to them passes away.
- ▶ Hold an annual “customer appreciation” party either at your offices, if space permits, or in a small room at a local party center.
- ▶ Pick up the phone and call your customers just to say hello, or stop-in for a quick visit if in the area of where they work.

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■ Networking Organizations

Small businesses with limited marketing budgets often turn to networking groups as a means to create top-of-mind awareness. These groups range from chambers of commerce to industry specific trade organizations to referral-based clubs. All have membership fees. Research them before joining. Go as a guest to their meetings before making a decision.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to take a company from points A to B as it relates to making your company famous. Following the advice above gets your name on the map. It's a great start. The key to long-term success, however, is to sustain top-of-mind awareness, which is described in **Part Two**. Congratulations to those who have implemented the basics and are ready to take their businesses to the next level!

About The Author: *Rick Iacoboni has created and implemented marketing initiatives for small businesses right up to Fortune 500 companies. He positioned them as major players in their respective target industries. He is managing partner of Domari Marketing Services. For more information and to see his published articles in their entirety, visit his website: www.domari.net.*

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