

Sustaining Top-Of-Mind Awareness: Part 2

By Rick Iacoboni

In professional sports, it has been said that defending a world championship title is more difficult than it was attaining it. The same philosophy goes with companies that create top-of-mind awareness for their customers and prospects. Creating awareness is difficult, but doable. Sustaining it is even more challenging. Successful companies need to do both.

This article – **Part Two** – is targeted to companies who have accomplished the basics discussed in **Part One**: Create a memorable tagline, produce a tri-fold brochure with matching business cards, develop a website, implement a customer relations program and join networking organizations. This article discusses how to keep the momentum going.

How To Sustain Top-of-Mind Awareness

■ More Collateral Materials

- ▶ **Postcards:** Can be designed to include an array of products and services. Great way to follow-up sales and/or phone calls. Strategy would be to mail small quantities, with follow-up calls placed within three business days for best results. Leave message if recipient doesn't answer after two attempts. For home improvement and landscaping industries, send fall and spring postcards with incentives to buy by a certain date before the busy season arrives.
- ▶ **Door Hangers:** Gets customers' undivided attention. Call-to-action prompts customers to buy now. Strategy would be to distribute in cities in which you are already doing business. This enforces name recognition. Check with cities first for permission. Don't walk on lawns or bother home owners who may be outside. There are services that will distribute door hangers.
- ▶ **Newsletters:** Create a quarterly two- or four panel newsletter with how-to articles that position you as an expert in the field. Distribute as a self-mailer and send to clients and prospects. Send an abbreviated version as an E-newsletter through E-mail services such as Constant Contacts or Gmail.

NOTE: Print collaterals on glossy, coated paper stock with full bleeds and full color on both sides. Use actual photos of your products and services.

■ Social Media Marketing

The best thing about social media is that it's free. The second best thing is that it's an effective way to brand your business, increase exposure, drive people to your website and network. The key is to separate your "business" from your "personal" social outlets.

From a business standpoint, your Facebook, Linked In and Twitter accounts should include a business profile. Your response to "What are you doing now?" should be something like: "I'm a widget manufacturer looking for distributors who need high quality widgets at an affordable price." Your blog should offer industry advice. It can be a *how-to* article or the *10 things to look for when choosing a XXX*. It can also be business observations or industry trends.

(Continued)

■ Trade Shows:

Taking your show on the road -- I.E. trade shows -- is one of the best ways to get in front of a lot of customers and prospects in a relatively short period of time. Unlike other forms of marketing, you can meet and greet people the old-fashioned way -- in person. Not only can you describe the features and benefits of your product or service, but you create that all important first impression. Trade shows range from church events and community home days to targeted theme shows and huge local and national shows.

The key word here is "professional." Plan ahead. Your booth must not look thrown together. Have a professional banner created, along with professional table top graphics, along with professionally designed and printed show literature. Handouts are recommended, but get ones that nobody else has. Research this on-line. You'll be surprised about what you will find. Make sure you and your employees are professionally dressed and behave professionally. Limit use of cell phones or food consumption at booth.

■ Advertising

Advertising is my least preferred way of generating top-of-mind awareness -- especially if you have a limited budget. Just be careful here. Here are some tips:

- ▶ Print ads: it will take at least six months to determine if an ad is working for you.
- ▶ Don't invest a lot of money in phone book ads. Just make sure your Yellow Pages internet presence is acceptable. Don't overspend here!
- ▶ Be careful of the coupon books. They sell price, not value. Obviously they work for certain industries. Watch for the hard sell here.
- ▶ Consider "special section" opportunities for publications which have a supplement that caters to your particular industry. I.E. home improvement, weddings, etc.
- ▶ Advertorial publications are worth considering. Instead of paying for an ad, you pay for a story to be written about you. The word "advertorial" is a combination of the words "advertising" and "editorial."
- ▶ Community newspapers/magazines and church bulletins are good for branding and community support but are not always cost-effective in generating business. Do your research.

Outsource Marketing

Creating and sustaining top-of-mind awareness can be difficult for the small business owner who already wears many hats. During challenging times, the need for marketing has never been greater. A cost-effective option would be to outsource the marketing -- on a project-by-project basis -- to either a small marketing agency or independent contractor. Interview several before making a decision. Look at their websites, portfolios and customer testimonials. Referrals are golden.

(Continued)

DOMARI MARKETING

Making Companies Famous

Conclusion

The beauty of effective marketing is the synergy that occurs when several initiatives are in motion at one time. A successful top-of-mind marketing campaign can create the perception that a small business is larger than they really are, positioning them as a real player in their industry. Perception wins.

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.*

© Any reproduction or editing of this article by any means mechanical or electronic without the express written permission of Rick Iacoboni is prohibited.
