Are You Shooting Yourself in the Foot?
Tips to Help You Get the Right Message Across
By Victoria Munro

What sort of an impression are you really making? As we seek to gain new customers, many of us overlook the obvious—how we appear to those we want to influence most. Making a positive impression, whether in person, through printed materials or via the Internet, is worth thinking about.

Your Message
To ensure you evoke a positive response, you must be crystal clear about what you want to say. Distill the essence or core of your message into the fewest possible words so that it can be heard or read in 15 seconds or less. Take time to craft your message. Make it clear, concise and compelling.

Getting Your Message Across

In Person
- Gain visibility by joining associations for industries or professions related to what you sell.
- Establish yourself as an expert by giving informative speeches on topics related to your business. Hone your presentation skills to give talks that are polished and professional. Understand your audience and make sure that what you have to say is a worthwhile investment of their time.
- Write articles for professional journals and industry publications your target customers read.

Via Printed Marketing Materials
- Design quality marketing materials that accurately portray who you are and what you offer. Convey a professional image that will help customers and prospective customers feel comfortable and confident about you and your company.
- Consistency is important. Make sure all your stationery, brochures and other promotional materials look like a cohesive family. Use these to create growing brand awareness within your target market.
- Your business card maybe the only representation of you and your company that you’ll leave with someone. Dollar for dollar, it’s probably your most powerful marketing tool. Keep it simple, clear, and easy to read and understand. Never leave home without it—keep a stash of extra cards in your glove box, briefcase and computer bag.

Through Your Company Website
Your business website may also be people’s first impression of your company.
- Make sure the appearance—the look and feel—is appropriate for your type of business and is consistent with your print materials*. Your website should reflect your business personality, whether it’s formal, fun, high tech, etc.
- Organize the navigation so that visitors can easily find what they’re looking for.
• Your visitor’s finger is on the mouse button—you only have six to eight seconds to capture his or her attention. It’s even more important to communicate your message in a clear and compelling way here.

Keep your target customers in mind as you get your message out. Seek to understand them and what’s important to them. Whether you’re communicating one-on-one, as a speaker to an audience, via printed material or through your website, put your best foot forward and make sure you present a consistent, professional image with a memorable and meaningful message.

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About the Author: Victoria Munro, along with husband Dave Block, are co-founders of Make-it-Fly® LLC a company dedicated to creating success for small business owners through creatively-designed programs and tools. Victoria has started and run nine different businesses. To receive FREE business success articles, tips to help you with your business, sign up for their award-winning ezine, “In-Flight Refueling,” at www.makeitfly.com. Contact Victoria: Victoria@Make-it-Fly.com.

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