

Unleash Your Marketing Creativity and Increase Sales

By Victoria Munro

“Creativity involves breaking out of established patterns in order to look at things in a different way.” – Edward de Bono

Marketing is the lifeline of your business. As an entrepreneur, you can't afford to neglect it. Growth and survival won't happen without marketing. Unless your current marketing is working really well and you have more customers than you know what to do with, don't keep doing what you've always done! **Unleash your creativity and try out some new ideas!** We've listed several to start your creative juices flowing.

Hold a brainstorming session

Gather a group of friends, colleagues or employees to brainstorm marketing ideas for your business. Make it worth their while – perhaps treat them to dinner first. Make and follow a clear agenda.

Possible topics might include:

- Explain your current and past marketing activities and the results. Ask for suggestions on how each could be more effective.
- Have participants take a critical look at your marketing materials and offer suggestions.
- Describe the major obstacles your business faces and ask for ideas on how to overcome them.
- Discuss ways to increase the number of qualified leads.
- Ask for ideas on services or products you could offer that meet a current need in the market.

Brainstorming can be invaluable, but will only work if you **resist the temptation to become defensive or comment on ideas generated**. This will quickly stifle creativity. You may have already tried a suggestion made, with pitiful results, but keep quiet and keep an open mind! Record everything and take time to review it later.

Never shoot down wild ideas. In his best-selling book *Marketing Outrageously*, Jon Spoelstra writes about his time as president of the New Jersey Nets. They had a page in their company manual that said: “**If people fall down laughing when you present an idea**, that idea has a chance of becoming a breakthrough idea. When an idea is so outrageous that it causes people to laugh at the idiocy of it, then it's time to push the outrageous envelope and see if that idea can be developed.” Joe's marketing efforts with the Nets proved to be wildly successful.

Study your competitors

How are they marketing? What is working for them? Why is it working? Are they using methods you could adopt and improve on?

Take a trip

Visit or talk to those in similar industries or professions in other cities and states. Find out how they are marketing and what is working in their area. Keep in touch and trade marketing suggestions.

Start a 'Marketing Ideas' file

Always be on the lookout for fresh ideas. Every time you come across an article, a brochure or an ad that appeals to you, drop it in the file. When you need to create a new marketing piece, write an ad or rewrite your marketing plan, you have a file full of ideas and you won't have to start from scratch.

Avoid Creativity Killer Comments Like:

- That will never work for us
- Great idea for another business
- I don't have the time it would take to do that
- Our budget won't stretch that far
- People in our profession/industry don't do things like that
- Sounds like something my kids would come up with
- We tried that last year and it didn't work

If you don't feel very inspired and imaginative, remember **creativity is like a muscle: the more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes**. Start working out today with some of the above ideas!

(592 words)

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