

## **Make Your Business Visible**

The visibility of your business may seem insignificant, but it is a key factor to the success of many enterprises.

"Being visible comes in many ways," says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service's rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. "Today we hear a great deal about your online visibility. Plus, you have visibility, in a sense, when people know your name and that you exist."

"Yet the visibility we are talking about here is the ability to be seen by customers as they walk or drive by your business," he continued.

When thinking about visual presence, business owners need to consider several aspects. The first item is signage. Do you have a sign? And is it visible to foot and vehicle traffic? For example, someone passing by has less time to see a sign that is against the front of your building than one that juts out and can be seen from both directions.

When walking up to a store, how many times have you had to step back to see if this was the business you wanted because the name wasn't visible? The reality is that you need visibility from both directions.

As you think about developing your external look, you need to keep your brand in mind in terms of color, logos and typeface. Also, you need to consider the exterior of your building. Anything you do to increase your visible presence must blend in with the existing exterior or whatever plans you have to enhance the outside.

Your sign must have appropriate size lettering that is large enough to be read from a distance. Also, the lettering font must be easy to read. Think about people having to spot your sign while driving on a busy city street. And think about the color contrast between your lettering and your background.

You must consider sign height as well. You want it low enough to be seen but not so low that it gets blocked. You also may want to consider sign lighting.

However, your sign is just one part of your external visible presence. You may have the opportunity to have props outside that can draw attention to your business. These can range from flowers or a bench to items that your store sells. Signboards also can be effective.

"When thinking about your outside, remember it is marketing," says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). "It needs to be neat, clean, attractive and something that you change on a regular basis."

If you have windows, use them to enhance your presence. The window displays should draw people into the store to see more by showcasing your products or creating a mood or even something whimsical.

However, be careful about the depth of window displays. You don't want people looking through the entire store. It is distracting. Use backdrops to avoid overloading the visual senses. It helps customers focus on your message.

"These same ideas work also if you are operating a booth at a trade show or fair," says (last name).

Visual pull is a strong motivator. Use it to get attention and to pull people into your business. Make it an effective part of your marketing.

For more help, check with your local Extension Service office at [insert phone number and email address]. Also visit NDSU's small-business support website at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness) and sign up for the monthly newsletter. Or check out Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz](http://www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz) or Twitter at @gmuske. Another online resource is [www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship](http://www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship).

Joining groups such as your local chamber of commerce can be helpful. The Small Business Administration and its related organizations, such as the Small Business Development Centers and SCORE, also can be valuable resources.

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