

Traditional Marketing Remains Important

While today's business owners find they need to market online, they shouldn't ignore traditional marketing methods.

"The reality is that an effective marketing campaign uses the tool that best reaches the target market," says (insert local name, title and county office). "For many businesses owners, especially those in rural communities, that tool continues to be one of the traditional marketing venues."

An example of such a venue is the local newspaper. In small communities, the local paper serves as an important link to many of the citizens. If a business owner is focused on a message appealing to people in the community, the local paper can be the best marketing tool to use. It often is a cost-effective means of getting a message of interest to the population of the area.

"Similarly, local radio stations and local access television stations also can represent an effective marketing channel," says Glenn Muske, rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist for the North Dakota State University Extension Service. "Rates can be very reasonable. It all depends on who your target market is."

Paid advertising isn't the only way for business owners to reach potential customers, however. Sending news releases to the local media sources can be a no-cost way of increasing the business's visibility. .

Here are some ways to help ensure the media uses the release:

- * Make sure that what is in the release truly is news and not just promotion.
- * Keep the release short; that means usually a page, and no more than two pages.
- * The release should be relevant, timely, interesting, informative and even entertaining.
- * Provide information on how to contact the business. Include the business's Web address if it has a website.
- * Get to know the local media sources. Ask them what they are looking for in a news release.
- * Double-check the release for accuracy, spelling and grammar.

"For you, the business owner, the press release must have a purpose," Muske says. "You need to understand the outcomes you desire. The expectation need not be large; it may simply be a piece of news that reminds people of your business."

Becoming the "local expert" is another marketing opportunity.

"If you are in an area where people have similar questions, there might be an opportunity for you to develop a regular news column where those questions can be answered," Muske says. "If you get the same question two or three times, you probably can guess that there are many more with that same question. So work with your local media to become the local expert whom they can turn to for answers and who maybe contributes a regular column."

When deciding to market products or services, business owners must consider all marketing methods available and select the tools that focus on the message they want to send and the audience they want to reach.

“Also be sure to evaluate any marketing campaign you try,” (last name) advises. “You need to find out what works for you. Business owners often think that this is a difficult task. However, it can be as simple as asking one question: ‘What brought you into my store today?’”

For more ideas and assistance, contact your local Extension Service office, go to NDSU’s Small Business Support website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness or visit the national eXtension website for entrepreneurs at www.extension.org/entrepreneurship.