

Marketing is More Than Numbers

As a business owner, you probably have heard that customers will forget about your business, so you need to keep your name in front of them.

This need to keep in your name visible always has been a part of marketing. However, today the aim seems to be to have our marketing message go viral, as the Super Bowl Oreo tweet did in 2013. Small-business owners are encouraged to provide several tweets and posts each day. In the world of social marketing, “more” always seems to be the message.

Thus, many business owners feel marketing is a game of numbers. They begin to think that too few messages means no one knows they exist.

Yet, business owners are warned about sending too many messages. Oversaturation can lead potential customers to feel bombarded.

“So business owners are forced to look for balance,” says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). “They want to hit that magical number that maintains their visibility without being viewed as a pest. And all of this needs to be done under their own limitations of time and money.”

Yet balance is not something you can achieve easily. Customers and potential customers differ in how often they want to see your business message. They also differ about the marketing medium used to deliver the message to them.

“Balance is less about numbers than it is about knowing your audience and providing a mix of messages,” says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service’s rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “People do not want to be overwhelmed with messages that just sell.”

To find the right balance, business owners need to consider factors such as:

- Audience demographics – You need to realize that broad classifications do not correctly identify the entire category of customers. For example, individuals in the baby boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) are more likely to view messages in the traditional media, while millennials (those born from the early 1980s to the early 2000s) will be more likely to see the message if it is online and readable via a mobile device.
- Focus –Provide a message that focuses on a primary audience and offers them a clear benefit.
- Breadth of topics – Messages must do more than just sell. They also must help the audience understand who your company is and what it stands for. Messages also can highlight a user, showcase customer feedback or provide information on getting more from a product or service.
- Purpose –Trying to attract new customers requires more messages than when you are retaining existing customers. Also, when trying to attract new customers, your message distribution plan may include more varied channels.

The bottom line: Rarely will you win by having the largest total number of marketing messages. Focus on your marketing goals and key audience, and remember to include more than just a sales pitch in your effort.

For more help with your marketing, 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 and sign up for the monthly newsletter. Or check out Facebook at www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz or Twitter at @gmuske.

Other resources include <http://powerofbusiness.net> and www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship. 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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For more information, contact glenn.muske@ndsu.edu or call (701) 328-9718. You also can visit our website, www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness.