

Good Marketing Includes the Little Things

When you think of marketing for your small business, have you thought about the little things that might undo your major efforts?

“It may seem a little crazy or even funny that small things might make a major advertising campaign ineffective,” says (Insert name and title) of (Insert county). “Yet think about how you react to what some might call the little things.”

An example of a little thing is how you dress when you are not at work. Remember, reputations are formed not just where you work but anytime you come into contact with your current or future customers.

However, your reputation goes beyond your customer base. It may have an impact on someone who has contact with someone in your customer base. For example, what if your behavior or dress comes up in a conversation with the person who is just about to make a major purchase from your company? It happens, and the smaller the community, the greater the likelihood of this happening.

Perhaps you rationalize it by thinking that these issues should not influence your business image, but they might. Certainly, you have some degree of latitude, but you never know when a small thing can become a major barrier.

So what other seemingly small issues do you need to consider?

Some people believe that turning your back to them is improper. Others pick up clues from dusty shelves or less than sparkling floors. Maybe even not yielding the right of way to a customer may be an issue.

Sometimes the issue isn't what you do but how you do it. You can add calling a customer the wrong name or mispronouncing his or her name to the list of little things. A related mistake is putting the wrong name or misspelling the name on a receipt or anything else written.

So how do you know what might be a trigger point?

“Probably the easiest first step is to consider what are the issues that influence you as a consumer,” says Glenn Muske, the North Dakota State University Extension Service's rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist. “Then asks family and friends for issues that they have noticed.”

“You need to be open to their opinions and ideas,” Muske continued. “The things that we are discussing are very nebulous. They may mean nothing to most people but can be a big deal to others.”

Also, think about what you consider good service. The issue may just be the timing of your offer to assist someone.

Finally, think about whether your body language matches the things you say and do. This might be your eyes looking around while talking to someone or arms crossed when being asked to rectify a problem with an item you sold.

So as you develop and readjust your marketing strategy, make sure you are keeping the little things in mind. As much as anything, the small things can be disastrous to your business.

For more help with your marketing plan, 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.