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Who is your target market, and how do you reach them?

Almost every day, business owners are approached by advertising salespeople who have a “great offer” for you. How do you decide what truly is the right advertising channel for your business? How do you ensure that every precious penny spent on marketing is reaching your target customer? How do you decide which social media channels will reach your ideal client? Where do you focus your limited advertising budget?

Over the next several months, we will present a special series that aims to assist you in developing an advertising and marketing strategy that will maximize the return on your promotional spending, and ensure that it is reaching the customers you want.

Understanding who is your target market is critical to developing a strategy that will work.

What is a target market?

Essentially, a target market is a specific group of existing or potential customers you are trying to reach with your marketing. It's your ideal customer. It could be current customers or new ones that haven't heard about you yet.

The people in a target market will have similar characteristics. These could include demographic (*ie: where they live, income, age, gender, etc*), or psychographic (*ie: what they like to eat, what they believe, how they make buying decisions*), or behavioural (*ie: where they shop, or the time of day they like to shop, how they get to your shop — by foot, bike, public transit, car etc.*), and social (*who they spend time with, what group or organizations they associate with, or who they follow online, etc.*).

Who is your target market?

Ask yourself, what do you know about them? Most of these you will know, and others you can determine by keeping a count in store.

- Who comes into your business now?
- What age range are they in?
- Are they married or single?
- Are they male or female?
- Do they have children?
- Do they come in alone or with friends or family?
- Do they come in the day, evening, or on the weekends?
- Do they come in often enough that you know them by name?
- Do they buy the same things or different things?
- Are they sensitive to prices or sales/ promotions?
- How do they decide what they want to buy?
- Do they ask for your advice when purchasing?
- How did they learn about your business?
- What groups are they associated with? (ie. sports teams, soccer, parent council at school, etc.)

The more you know about your existing customers, and why they do business with you, the better you will be able to make decisions about where and how to advertise to best reach them.

How do you reach them?

You can use many tools to inform your target market about your product/services, including; advertising, public relations, sales promotions (*both in store and online*), direct marketing, events, etc. You can also use social media as a tool. In future newsletters, we will give you a breakdown of who each of these types of advertising reach.

First, you need to understand who you are trying to attract to your business. Second, you need to think about everything you know about them. Once you have a clear understanding of your ideal client, you will have a clearer understanding of where your advertising dollars can best be spent to reach them. Many business owners have good instincts about how to reach their clients, but having a clear, strategic approach to marketing will help avoid wasting money on advertising that does not effectively reach your target market.

In the next few newsletters, we will be working through the elements of an effective marketing strategy that you can implement for your business. This series is designed to give you the information you need to make informed decisions about where, when and how to reach your customer.

This month, we will focus on: Who is your ideal customer and what do you know about them?

To make the most of this series, it is important that you have an understanding of who is coming to your business, and why. It is also important to understand who is NOT your target market.

There are many ways to gather this information: informally during conversation with your customers, with a short survey sheet that fits in the billfold or at the cash register. Alternatively, you can use an on-line survey like Survey Monkey (but many customers are overwhelmed by the number of businesses that are asking you to go online to fill out their survey, and less and less people are doing it.)

*The survey should be short and focus on a few key questions you **need to know** versus what would be **nice to know**:*

- How do they identify their sex? Male, Female, Other
- Age: give ranges ie. 18 and under, 19-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 66+
- What kind of work do they do? Tradespeople, Entrepreneurs, White collar, Administrative, Professional
- Where do they live? within 1 km, within 5 km, within 15 km, tourist from _____ other _____ etc.
- How did they get here? walk, transit, cycle, car, etc.
- Why did they come? Work nearby, Came to the area for another reason, Referral from a friend, Found the business on-line, etc.
- Why do they come to your business?
- How did they hear about your business?

Here are some other questions to consider:

- What is their educational/ training background?
- Why do they come to your business?
- What product are they coming to your business for?
- What do they like about your business?
- Are their tastes traditional, adventurous, exotic? Are they vegetarian, vegan, food allergies /sensitivities etc.
- What charities, community groups, etc. are they associated with? (Many regular customers will ask business owners to support/ sponsor their causes).

Next month, we will apply your understanding of who your target market is to define what media channels are right for you.

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