



Grassroots Marketing – Building the Brand Without Breaking the Budget

NJ BUSINESS SOLUTIONS is a service to the members of the New Jersey Business & Industry Association and the readers of New Jersey Business magazine. These articles are intended to help New Jersey employers deal with practical issues affecting their business operations.

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In today's global business world, where the company across the continent is as much of a competitor as the company next door, business owners must find creative and affordable ways to connect with their target markets and persuade consumers to purchase their products and services.

One of the most cost-effective techniques businesses can use to promote their goods and services is grassroots marketing. With grassroots marketing, you don't need to spend your retirement reserve on a splashy ad campaign to grow sales. Instead, you develop creative methods to capture customers and keep them captivated with your offerings.

Customers in turn become your biggest advertisers – generating a "buzz" by talking about your brand with other potential customers.

A successful grassroots marketing campaign activates a perpetual emotional connection between a brand and its consumers. Customers yearn for the next experience, to be part of a special community – a club culture where members are privy to special events, new product offerings, new

information, discounts and meaningful exchanges and experiences that keep users on the cutting edge – ahead of the consumer pack.

The impact of grassroots marketing translates to large and small brands alike – from the digital music movement on iTunes that has customers lining up for the next generation Apple iPod, to the environmental and healthy lifestyle advocacy marketing campaigns of Stonyfield Farm, the nation's top producer of organic yogurt. Socially-driven themes and partnerships are among the most popular techniques used by companies seeking to bond with consumers through grassroots marketing.

The first steps to developing a grassroots marketing campaign include understanding your customers and the importance of creating an emotional bond between your brand and target market. Who are your customers? Where do your customers reside? What role do the customers play in the sales process? How can you best reach your target audience? What are the ways customers will identify with your products and services? What offerings will you provide to welcome and reward cus-



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tomers? What kind of strategic partnerships can you leverage to expand your brand's influence in the market?

How will you reach your customers? Through a special event? An invitation with a gift offering? A newsletter with information they can use? A blog that welcomes customer feedback and user-generated images and comments? How will you keep customers coming back for more?

To start, establish realistic goals and a budget, and assemble a marketing team, either in house or in partnership with a professional agency. The activities you choose

to connect with your target market should reflect your passion for your brand and brand values.

Not only is grassroots marketing an affordable way for companies to build sales and develop a following, grassroots marketing gives businesses the ability to weed out customers who are not the right fit for their products or services early in the promotional process.

The goal of grassroots marketing is to entice customers to graze on your brand long enough to find the grass really is greener on your side of the fence.

for industry events around the country. Membership required to view full content.

- Marketing.org – the Web site for the Business Marketing Association, with a state chapter in New Jersey, features articles, events, training and certification programs. Benefits of membership include access to the association's industry surveys.
- Multicultural.com – part of Multicultural Marketing Resources' company site, it provides members with articles and a speakers bureau on the Latino, African-American, Asian, Female and Gay and Lesbian markets.

For More Information:

For those interested in learning more about grassroots marketing, there are a number of trade marketing associations and Web sites with information and resources, including:

- KnowThis.com – a site for marketing basics and tutorials, especially for beginners or professionals seeking free resources and links to leading academic journals and industry publications.
- Allaboutbranding.com – sponsored by a New Zealand design company, the site contains numerous articles and marketing case studies on brand management and development.
- Marketingpower.com – the Internet portal of The American Marketing Association, with chapters around the country, including New Jersey. Source

Banking

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CONCLUSION

No bank operates in isolation. Conversely, synergistic effects may occur when financial institutions make sound investments in their communities. The arm of a regulatory measure may provide the impetus for banks to examine how they can aid their communities. Ultimately, banks must choose the degree to which they wish to use their singular roles to benefit disparate geographic areas. New Jersey has some of the highest per capita household-income areas in the United States, juxtaposed with struggling urban areas. While banks may not represent a societal panacea, they do have the capacity to push funds in the right direction. ❧

Manufacturing

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programmable thermostats are two proven methods for reducing weather-related energy use.

5. Determine Occupancy and Non-occupancy Energy Use: Occupancy energy consumption is the energy you consume in a building when it's occupied for its ordinary purpose or function. In a manufacturing facility, this would be during the hours when products are being manufactured.

Non-occupancy energy consumption, understandably, is the energy you consume when a building isn't occupied. Where do you spend energy dollars when no one is in the building? Are you lighting finished or raw-goods inventory; heating water for restroom use, or setting back heating and cooling temperatures; and lighting exit signs with incandescent bulbs vs. LED?

6. Identify Times of Minimum

Use: Building designers traditionally have installed equipment that can perform functionally during peak loads. Utility companies bill customers for peak demand for electricity, steam and even natural gas. The peak rate influences energy costs, but the minimum rate of energy consumed also can have a very significant influence on energy consumption.

If you're aiming to conserve energy dollars, look at the peak-rate use or demand. If you're also looking to conserve energy use, look throughout your manufacturing facility at what happens during the hours in which minimum use occurs.

Tips For Saving Energy Costs

1. Make energy consumption a line item in the budget – managers will make an effort to keep their costs within budgets and look for ways to save money.
2. Use more efficient industrial equipment and processes. For manufactur-

ers, the most promising targets for efficiency gains are motor drives, boilers and steam, lighting and reducing air leaks in compressor lines.

3. Make energy savings one of the factors weighed when considering changes and improvements to products, procedures and production methods.

4. When possible, use energy a second time. For example, heat as a by-product.

5. Appoint an internal change agent that will be your energy manager and establish a team challenged with conducting an energy-conservation program.

6. Communicate management's commitment to energy conservation.

Energy assessments and conservation programs can be time-consuming, but the payback is well worth it. If you need assistance with your energy assessment or with evaluating opportunities for energy savings, contact NJMEP by phone at 973-642-7099, or on the web at www.njmep.org. ❧