Advertising for Small Businesses Can Be a Critical Decision

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Advertising for small businesses can be a critical decision

After a company creates the key ingredients of product excellence and superior service, its goal is to find a means of reaching potential customers. This requires promotion, which is one of the greatest challenges confronting any company.

Since most small businesses operate on tight budgets, advertising and promotion are frequently viewed as expendable cash outlays.

Initially, the business owner needs to set company goals and establish the purpose of advertising. Next he or she must determine which advertising media will help the company meet its goals. Finally, the owner should decide when to advertise.

For companies that sell products that are purchased frequently, advertising is needed on a regular basis. In the case of products and services that have seasonal sales, advertising should lead the seasonal trends.

If the mission of advertising is to let potential customers know about a product or service, advertising will be much more intense than when advertising is simply being used as a reminder.

In times when business is good and sales are strong, a company can cut back on advertising. When sales slump, advertising expenditures become even more critical to the welfare of the company.

A potential customer must hear a message many times before action is taken. This is especially true for new businesses that need consumers to alter existing purchasing habits. Normally an advertisement must be heard three times before it is noticed or it sinks into a consumer's consciousness.

A general rule of thumb is that a potential customer must hear an advertisement nine times before s/he will visit that business. Therefore, the consumer must be exposed to an advertisement or a promotion 27 times before action is taken.

The cumulative effect of advertising and promotion is critical. Unfortunately, on an average day consumers are saturated with hundreds of small advertisements. This leads to the filtering of advertising messages by potential customers.

Frequently a business owner places a great deal of importance on the media, such as a newspaper, and waits for customers. If the owner feels the response was inadequate, s/he will conclude the particular medium tested was ineffective. A different medium might be selected, possibly radio. A few advertisements are run and still no customers. The business owner will be even more frustrated and may decide neither of those media work for his or her business.

In reality a strong promotional plan is one that reaches a consumer 27 times. The consumer will then begin to notice and positively patronize the business. An existing business does not have the same formidable challenge as a new business. However, an existing business must continue to remind the customer of its presence to retain the customer's loyalty.

At its best, advertising provides a "coherent direction" of effort for a company. There are no magic answers to determine how much to budget, when to advertise or which media is best. Possible media outlets include television, radio, print, email, billboards, word-of-mouth, the Internet, direct mail and social media (Facebook and Twitter).

Most businesses need to use a combination of advertising media to reach customers. For advertising to be effective, the customer must hear or see the advertisements many times. The business that is persistent in advertising will reap the greatest benefit.

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Consider registering trademarks, copyrights

As e-commerce expands and access to digital works on the Internet increases, the need for businesses to protect intellectual property has become increasingly urgent.

Trademark and copyrights, two distinct forms of intellectual property, are governed by different bodies of law.

A copyright protects original works of authorship that have been fixed in a tangible medium of expression. Books, songs, paintings, plays, architecture and computer software, for example, are all eligible for copyright protection.

Although a copyright does not protect facts, ideas, concepts, systems or methods, the way these things are expressed can often be protected by copyright. Copyright protection originates in the United States Constitution and is outlined by the Copyright Act.

Copyright law provides authors of original works exclusive rights to use their works, including the right to reproduce, distribute, perform and display the protected work. As a general rule, it is illegal for others to violate the copyright holder’s exclusive right of ownership of the original work. Anyone violating those exclusive copyrights can be held liable for copyright infringement.

Copyright protection attaches to original works of authorship at the moment of creation. However, copyright registration provides important benefits and is a prerequisite to enforcing one’s copyright, including the right to bring a lawsuit for infringement.

Copyrighted works can be registered with the United States Copyright Office, and the registration process is relatively simple and inexpensive. Copyright protection is available for a limited term, the length of which depends on a number of factors including when the work was created and published.

A trademark, on the other hand, is a word, phrase, symbol or design (or combination thereof) that identifies and distinguishes the goods or services of one business from those of others. As with copyrights, certain protection automatically attaches to a trademark by virtue of its use in commerce. Such protection, however, is limited to the geographic region in which the trademark is actually used to sell goods or services.

Filing a state or federal trademark application can provide important benefits, including notifying others of your claim to be the exclusive owner of the mark and the right to keep others from providing the same or similar goods or services using the same or a similar mark.

When registering a trademark, the first step is to conduct a search for identical or similar trademarks in the same or similar goods or services using the same or a similar mark.

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State trademark registrations, like copyright registrations, are relatively simple and inexpensive to obtain. Federal trademark registrations are often more difficult and expensive.

Trademark applications can register for federal trademark or copyright should consider consulting an attorney for valuable information about the federal trademark law.

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Donation helps school’s programs

BUSINESS IN SAVANNAH

Cash-n-Carry, a salvage yard in Savannah, presented a check for $5,000 to the students and staff of Haven Elementary School on April 20. The gift will be used to pay for supplies and to enhance the science and math curricula at the school.

Kenny Grainger, owner of Cash-n-Carry, said the fundraiser, which went on for several months, is just one way the staff at his business gives back to the community.

“For years now our business has depended on the loyal following of the citizens of Savannah. We are deeply appreciative of this loyalty, and we are excited about this opportunity to help the teachers and students of Haven Elementary,” Grainger said. “We hope this money will help this fine school continue to do the admirable job they have always done for our students.”

Haven principal Sharon Draeger said the donation will help the school enhance its technology and science instruction, as well as math.

“We are so thankful to our business partners at Cash-n-Carry for making the dreams of our students a reality,” Grainger said. “We want to thank everyone who made this possible.”

Cash-n-Carry is located at 2502 Caesar Road in Savannah. For more information, visit www.cashncarry.com.