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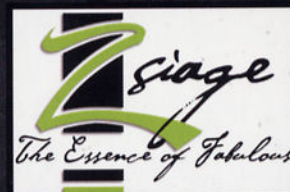
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Grassroots Marketing: 12 Ideas for Scrapbooking Business Owners

By Angie Pedersen

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Grassroots Marketing refers to marketing “from the bottom up”. This practice is also known as “Guerrilla Marketing” (after the book of the same name by Jay Conrad Levinson). Wikipedia.org defines it as “an unconventional way of performing promotional activities on a very low budget...many forms of publicity can be very inexpensive, and others are free.”

Whether you are a manufacturer, a scrapbooking retailer, or a “scraper-for-hire”, chances are you could use some ideas for promoting your products and services. But most small business owners don't have a hefty advertising budget to work with, nor do they have the time to brainstorm outrageous publicity stunts. Does that mean you are doomed to depending only on referrals and passersby for new customers? Not at all! This article provides specific ideas that you can use to help spread the word about what you offer the scrapbooking community.

An obvious low-budget marketing tool is canvassing locally with flyers, brochures, and business cards. Many small business owners experiment with putting flyers in mailboxes all over their neighborhoods and leaving business cards on community bulletin boards. Still their store traffic doesn't increase as they had hoped. They probably wonder what they are doing wrong.

It's not that they are doing anything wrong; promotional literature can be an effective means of letting people know about your company. But remember that the key to effective marketing is reaching your audience. Current statistics show that about one in four U.S. households scrapbook. So while putting flyers in every mailbox in the neighborhood will help spread the word about your scrapbooking business, 75% of the flyer recipients *aren't* your target audience. That's a lot of wasted time and resources.

Take the time to do some brainstorming -- define your customer base. Figure out where they go, what they read, where they spend their money, and what they want. Think about their problems and challenges, and how you can help solve them. Then plan how to put yourself in front of your audience.

Try these grassroots marketing tactics:

- 1. Get a website to promote your product & services.** It's best if you get your own domain name, like www.yourdomain.com. This looks more professional than something like yourdomain.freehostingservice.com. If you don't want to/can't pay monthly hosting fees, you can still register a domain name and have it point to the free hosted site. If you can't/don't want to mess with maintaining a full-fledged website, start a blog! They're super easy to maintain; if you can send an email, you can blog!
- 2. Leave business cards at photo centers.** Take this idea a step further and arrange to leave a stack of discount coupons (with your contact information) at other related local retailers *where your target market does business*, such as photo developers, portrait studios, and day care centers.
- 3. Offer to speak about document preservation and scrapbooking** at a local genealogy society meeting. Have “leave-behind” flyers available with a bullet-point list of tips, and include your contact information.

4. **Start a local networking group** for other local retailers or home-based consultants of all "flavors" (baskets, beauty products, children's toys, etc). Arrange to meet regularly to share marketing ideas and referrals.

5. **Lead a workshop for schoolteachers** on how to incorporate scrapbooking into classroom learning activities. Put your contact information on any handouts. Then offer a teacher's discount on supplies they purchase from you. Approach local homeschooling associations with a similar workshop.

6. **Write a press release or tip sheet** about how to organize photos and memorabilia, and submit it to local media during Get Organized Month.

7. **Offer referral incentives** to your current customers -- for every new customer they refer, they can receive a \$5 on their next order, or a free class.

8. **Teach Scrapbooking 101 classes** at local libraries, Parks & Recreation programs, and community colleges. You often can't sell on site during these classes, but you can have promotional literature available, so students can follow up with you after the class. Ask students, "Can I add you to my mailing list?" and then get their email and/or home address.

9. **Send out postcard mailers** highlighting upcoming sales, promotions, and classes. Postcards are cheaper and faster than full-size newsletters, and can even act as a coupon that customers bring into the store.

10. **Start a blog and post to it 2-3 times a week.** Offer organization tips, techniques to try, project examples, and be sure to announce upcoming classes and specials.

11. **Host an open house**, especially near gift-giving holidays like Christmas and Valentine's Day. If you have a retail location in a strip mall, consider coordinating a "progressive" open house with other storeowners that offer non-competing products or services.

12. **Have a magnetic sign printed for your car door**, citing the name, location, phone number, and URL for your business.

These ideas are only springboards for grassroots marketing campaigns – relatively quick, easy ways to start promoting your business on your own. Once you try a few, and get used to the idea (and practice) of "shameless self-promotion", it will get easier, and you'll start coming up with your own ideas. Here's to your success!

Resources to check out:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerilla_marketing
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_marketing_warfare_strategies
- Guerrilla Marketing homepage: <http://www.gmarketing.com/>
- Inc.com's Guide to Grassroots Marketing: <http://www.inc.com/guides/marketing/24074.html>
- <http://www.scrapbookmarketing.com>

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