

## Buy Me: The Art of Marketing and Selling

by Adam Chiffy, Business Consultant  
with the Small Business Development Center

One of the most important functions of a small business is selling your product or service. Sales are the life-blood of any company. The old saying “build a better mouse trap and the world will beat a path to your door” is only partly true. First the world has to know about your “better mouse trap” and then they need to know about you.

For many small business owners, marketing can appear complicated, time consuming, and expensive. Worse yet, many times your efforts appear only mildly effective even after you dedicate a great deal of time and money. The following ideas will outline a plan to make your marketing efforts more effective.

The first step in any successful marketing plan is to identify your target market. What you want to know and understand is who is buying your product or service and are there any similarities among your customers. Simply purchasing advertising space on the internet or in a local paper is usually not enough. You have to “target” specific people or businesses that want or need your products.

An existing company has a distinct advantage in determining its target market because there is already a customer base to study. For example, if you have a business such as a fitness center, you already have all your member’s home addresses. With a little bit of work and some computer software you can plot all your members on a map and define your geographic market. With this information in hand you can now look for opportunities to reach out to other people within this area.

Perhaps you are in a small retail business and do not have access to your customers home addresses. Do not let that discourage you. Now is the time to set up a mailing list and offer your customers coupons for signing up. Often we Americans are reluctant to give out our address because we do not want any more junk mail. However you may be surprised to find out how a small discount can provide the right incentive to provide that address.

The key to identifying your target market lies not in collecting addresses, but rather in collecting information about your current customers. It is okay to get out there and just talk to your customers. Simply asking “how did you hear about us?” can provide a wealth of information. The most important thing to remember about collecting information is that you need to write it down. Put all this information down on paper or better yet in your computer. The more you know about your existing customers the easier it will be to find new customers.

Marketing your company will become a much easier task after you truly understand who is buying your products. Selling your products can be as simple

as explaining the features and benefits of your product or service. Always remember it is not the feature that sells a product it is the benefit which that feature provides. If you keep that in mind when you are speaking to your target market you will have developed a successful marketing plan.

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