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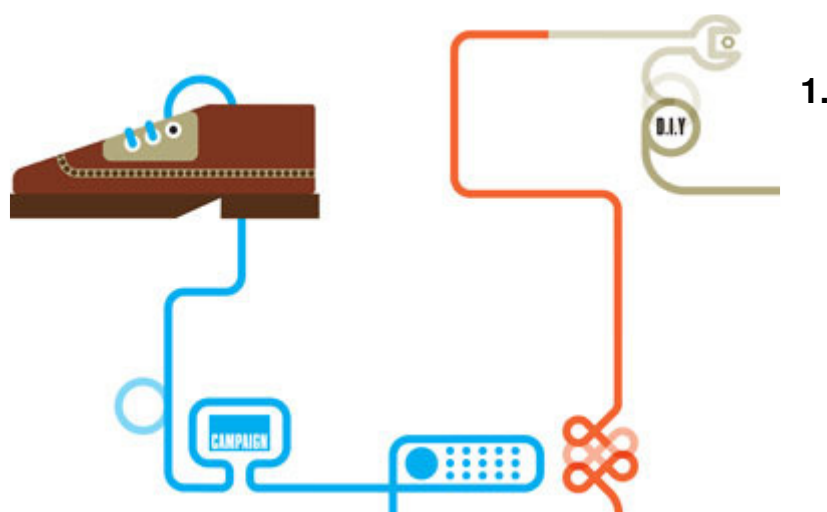
The magazine of The Chartered Institute of Marketing



## Feature Cheaper by the dozen

For economically challenged small enterprises we've come up with 12 ways to stretch your marketing moolah

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### Market research on the cheap

When entrepreneur Jennifer Irvine founded her health food delivery business The Pure Package, she conducted some free market research that serendipitously turned into a useful early marketing coup.

“I asked my friends what they thought of the food I was producing, but they all said it was delicious and I felt I wasn't getting a balanced opinion. So I asked myself, ‘who are the most opinionated people?’ – journalists, of course.”

Irvine bought some papers and magazines and targeted journalists at the relevant titles, sending them dishes to try and a feedback form. “Many of them wrote stories about it, which resulted in a flurry of interest in the business.”

Without meaning to, Irvine had killed two birds with one stone. The result was a full order book and £192,000 turnover in her first year of trading. With the help of some PR and a smattering of awards, this increased 158 per cent in year two.

## 2. Get a little bit sneaky

When B2B agency GyroHSR wanted to bring in new talent it realised the best way to do this would be to pilfer the ranks of its closest rivals. The trick was to be subtle, but deliver a strong message that its door was open to new top talent.

The result of some brainstorming was a month-long campaign that ran in February and March this year. GyroHSR printed 100,000 sandwich bags with the question “Should I stay? Should I go?” and distributed them to cafes close to competitor agencies in Soho and Charlotte Street in London.

“The creative was designed to seed the idea of a job move in the minds of potential GyroHSR candidates,” says Patrick Danaher, group marketing manager, at GyroHSR. “A full scale stakeout was deployed in November and December 2009 to scope out the most appropriate cafes for the sandwich bag message.”

It meant that every day scores of advertisers and marketers were eating out of the GyroHSR recruitment message. The campaign boosted Gyro’s candidate pool by 210 per cent, increased agency traffic to the website by 20 per cent and was directly linked to three important hires.

It cost £3,500, yet achieved average savings of more than £25,000 in terms of recruitment agency fees.

## 3. Entice with the zeitgeist

If you want to attract attention with a competition giveaway you may be surprised by how little you actually have to spend. You can throw all manner of gadgets at people – TVs, cars and computer equipment all go down well, of course – but sometimes we all yearn for something a little more down to earth.

“Classic, real world, offline word of mouth remains crucial to selling just about anything”

Or at least that was the conclusion Ben Fox, content editor at online electrical retailer Appliancesonline.co.uk, reached when his firm wanted to increase brand awareness by offering a prize.

Having tried handing out an iPad, smart phones and high-value electrical bundles in previous competitions, Fox instead gambled on a value offer from Tesco and bought vouchers. At £250 they were considerably cheaper than the £1,000-plus forked out in previous campaigns.

Yet the results were impressive. “We got 5,000 unique respondents just by popping it up on Facebook, Twitter and a couple of forums. This giveaway beat the iPad’s return by more than 300 per cent,” says Fox.

“We only retail online, so web savvy people who enter online competitions are the kind of people we like to make contact with. We asked entrants to tell us how we could improve our delivery service so there was a certain amount of research in there as well – it just smashed expectations,” he says.

#### **4. DIY marketing**

In an owner-managed business the best marketer is likely to be that owner-manager. Oberoi Consulting founder Kavita Oberoi doubtless had more than marketing on her mind when she made her charitable appearance on TV show The Secret Millionaire. But going on TV to give away money is not only good for the soul; it’s undeniably good for the brand.

Thrusting cheques for tens of thousands of pounds into grateful recipients’ mitts can hardly be called “cheap”, however, so Oberoi advocates a more frugal form of DIY promotion – networking. “Networking and meeting as many people as possible from different industries is crucial,” she says. “You just never know when opportunities will arise, so keep an open mind.”

#### **5. Delegating marketing**

Still – and always – the best way to get people to buy is through recommendations from their friends. According to Rob Shreeve, founder of top London business club One Alfred Place, word of mouth is

central to the success of all products and services – books, hotels, accountants – and even more so with clubs.

Best of all it's free. "Classic, real world, offline word of mouth remains crucial to selling just about everything," says Shreeve.

Social networks can augment word of mouth because they help you reach more ears in less time, but good old-fashioned, peer-to-peer recommendation in the real world has the unbeatable personal touch and can also create a sense of exclusivity.

Shreeve puts the marketing emphasis on consistently good service and, by choosing to invest in elements that would have a "wow" factor for his target audience, such as original Warhol art, he hopes that aspects of his club's offering will generate talking points between potential customers and their friends.

## **6. Fire up your tweets**

You might be on Twitter, but unless you're building up a bigger website audience by getting people involved in regular conversation, what's the point? Winner of The Apprentice and founder of fashion site Chiconomise.com, Michelle Dewberry is a ferocious tweeter who believes it's best to attract people to your website with eye-catching offers.

"Apart from Google, Twitter is the biggest referring website to us," says Dewberry. "We put new deals on there and acquire competition prizes as an incentive for people to sign up."

But Dewberry warns that Twitter is not as cheap as it may seem. "What you save in money you make up for in the time invested in nurturing your following and giving them reasons to stay interested," she says.

## **7. Give away to get returns**

Everyone loves a freebie: business associates and journalists are no different.

Advocates – whether consumers, partners or media commentators – are far more likely to be a fan and want to mention your offering if they have

experienced it first hand.

With this in mind the Custom Cookie Company achieved TV slots on BBC's The One Show and Five's The Wright Stuff when it couriered 10 tins of freebie "election biscuits" to newspapers and TV stations ahead of this year's UK general election.

Meanwhile, Victoria Dixon, founder of photo doctoring company Enhance Me, offers promo material in goody bags at baby and parenting shows, yet spends less than £100 a year on marketing materials.

Kate Smith, owner of The Makery, a workshop-based business teaching craft skills, says traffic on her web site grew 120 per cent from the press coverage she received after sending trial products to media outlets.

Smith has taken it one step further and became a press pundit. She approached and formed partnerships with a handful of magazines and websites and now writes a monthly column in a sewing magazine – something that's "worth its weight in gold", she says.

"It positions The Makery as an authority in the field, allows us to talk about all aspects of our business in a non-obtrusive fashion and gives us immediate access to thousands of customers on a regular basis," says Smith. After she started writing the column traffic to her website increased by 25 per cent.

## **8. Be your own creative agency**

Craig Sams, founder of chocolate brand Green & Black's (now owned by Kraft), came up with the now solidly embedded brand name during a 15-minute discussion with his wife and co-founder Josephine Fairley.

"It was simple brainstorming. We sat around the table and Josephine just came up with it. We started with obvious worthy sounding names such as Eco-Choc, which weren't very appetising.

"Once we decided to go with a traditional Callard & Bowser-type name, Green & Black's immediately leapt to the top. And once we had it that was it, no more discussion," says Sams.

## 9. Turn misfortune on its head

Keira O'Mara, inventor of the breast-feeding sling Mamascarf, was featured on national TV four times when she offered herself as a case study of a business affected by Royal Mail workers' strike action last year.

The business is an online-only retailer and scarves are delivered by parcel, so sales were halted completely by the suspension of the post. O'Mara was interviewed in her sitting room for GMTV – she didn't even have to leave the house to gain prime time publicity.

## 10. Hit the headlines for something else

Party bags and gift specialist Charlie Moo's owner Joanne Dewberry received an excellent response when she decided to enter the Dorset Business Mum of the Year competition, run by the Daily Echo newspaper. Her campaign hit the social networks, eventually leading to 2,254 votes in her favour.

Dewberry's business was boosted by online endorsements from Sarah Brown and Claire Young of The Apprentice fame. "Through social networks I was acquiring votes from all over the world, networking and building contacts I would never have had the chance to meet in my normal 'stay at home mum' life. My sales have increased by 20 per cent on last year," she says.

Dewberry claims the knock-on effect in terms of media coverage has been "amazing", with frequent coverage for her business in her local newspaper and on BBC Radio Solent, as well as in national publications including Prima magazine and The Daily Mirror.

## 11. Target precisely

High-wire adventure business Go Ape went all out in its latest campaign with TV, social media, direct mail, radio and web advertising. The trick, according to founder Tristram Mayhew, was making a little go a long way.

Timing, audience and channel are the most important ingredients when money's tight, he argues. As are careful planning and sourcing, especially at a time when stagnant demand means marketing real estate can be picked up cheaply.

The TV campaign was trialled in the Tyne Tees area for three weeks on the ITV network. Direct mail was aimed at specific recipients close to Go Ape locations, giving them a time-sensitive booking offer. A radio prize competition worked in tandem with radio and online ad slots.

The result was a big uplift in traffic to the main website and to a specific campaign portal. The Maften Go Ape course – the focus of the TV ads – saw bookings jump. The TV campaign received 8,000 views in three weeks on YouTube, and Facebook referrals became one of the firm's top five sources of web traffic.

“Qualitative post-TV campaign research demonstrated a unanimous recognition of the key message of the advert – fun, excitement and a feel-good factor,” says Mayhew.

“All these elements connected with the need to escape by having fun at weekends, thus the theme of the advertisement fully engaged the audience. We're looking forward to continuing activity next year,” he says.

## **12. If all else fails, fill a shop with cats**

Even if Ikea hadn't bought the expensive TV slots, its advert involving 100 cats and the Wembley branch of the furniture chain would have hit its target. Filmed in a single night, the stars of the show were employees' pets.

Requirements were limited to a small amount of camera time, a large (though, as it proved, inadequate) “cat pen”, and a few professional animal handlers who were there to limit feline skirmishes.

Posted on selected video sharing sites, the ad went viral worldwide in a flash, and within five days it and other related “behind the scenes” footage had been downloaded two million times.

It had been “liked” by 4,000 people on YouTube alone (compared with 300 people who, for reasons known only unto themselves, gave it the thumbs down – maybe they were dog lovers).

Meanwhile a Facebook fan page dedicated to the Ikea cats – as they became known – quickly garnered 4,500 devotees, who set about uploading their own images of scenarios involving felines and furniture.

“Never work with children or animals” – unless you want a cheap, guaranteed blockbuster ad.

**Dan Matthews** is author of *The New Rules of Business: leading entrepreneurs reveal their secrets for success*

## Comments