

## SALES SAVVY FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

### Your Computer – Your Marketing Assistant

Some of your best marketing tools are at your fingertips. Thanks to technology, the way products and services are marketed, sold and delivered has changed forever. It's wise to consider how much your computer could be doing to expand your marketing reach and boost your sales, especially in an economic downturn. Take a look at your marketing strategy to determine which of the tools discussed in this article could be used in your business.

#### **Creating Your Database**

This fundamental tool includes customers, past customers, prospects, those just inquiring about your products or services, those who have responded to offers and influencers who have the potential to send business your way (your accountant, for example). Start with the contacts you know and are already working with and source business associations and tradeshows to identify others. You can also purchase databases from list brokers and online list providers. Such lists can be very useful, but tend to have a short shelf life so wait until you are ready to use the list before you invest.

#### **Maximize the Value of Your Website**

A website has the potential to do many of the jobs that salespeople used to do. A good website is "information rich," providing offers, information, tips and links that help a business maintain a relationship with its customers. Client testimonials, a list of clients and customer case studies make it easy for prospects to see themselves in the marketing messages on your site and help bridge the gap between marketing and sales.

Diana Alexander, owner of Sante Skin & Laser Center in Terrace uses her website to stay close to her existing customers in between visits to her salon and to attract new ones. Simply by clicking on a link on Sante's homepage ([www.santeskinandlaser.ca](http://www.santeskinandlaser.ca)), viewers can take advantage of 20% discounts offered in the current month. They will also be notified of future offers when they sign up for Sante's eNewsletter. The site also provides detailed before-and-after pictures and explains exactly what you will experience with various procedures without having to visit the spa.

#### **How Important is Search Engine Optimization?**

Search engine marketing is the most cost effective form of online advertising. Surveys have consistently shown the vast percentage of Internet users go to the major search engines to find the information they are looking for. Over 90% of this traffic comes through just a handful of search engines such as Google, Yahoo, MSN and others. It's essential to use the keywords in your website copy that will achieve top ranking on the search engines. A good web designer can help you refine your search engine positioning through use of keywords. You can also purchase search engine optimization (SEO) submission software designed to channel customers to your website, or hire a firm that specializes in this to help you.

Nancy Parker's Abbotsford company, Eyebrowz Design Inc. ([www.eyebrowz.com](http://www.eyebrowz.com)) was already well established but Nancy recognized that the Internet and search engine positioning could provide new marketing opportunities. Eyebrowz Design markets beauty products to consumers and other businesses that use these products such as aesthetic services and day spas. Catering to a distinct target market, Nancy started making product demonstration videos and posting them on YouTube. YouTube's parent company, Google, picked up the videos and then positioned them at the top of the search engine, providing excellent exposure for the company.

For more information on search engine positioning and resources, check out <http://searchenginewatch.com>.

#### **Email Marketing Campaigns**

Email campaigns are second only to search engine optimization as the most effective online marketing technique. Consider the advantages of an eNewsletter, for example, over the traditional printed newsletter.

You can distribute information instantly to selected groups from your database without incurring printing and mailing costs. The message gets out faster and the response time is quicker which speeds the entire sales cycle. You can track the results of your campaign and refine your message depending on the bounce backs, unsubscribe requests, number of click-throughs and other factors.

Templates for eNewsletters and other email campaigns are created by email marketing firms that specialize in the design and software management of these tools. The same template used for an eNewsletter can be used for other marketing campaigns such as email letters, or notices of a special offer. Karen Murphy and Jennifer Finley, owners of Kelowna-based Express Gift Baskets ([www.expressgiftbaskets.net](http://www.expressgiftbaskets.net)) and Canadian Cookie Express, ([www.cookieexpress.ca](http://www.cookieexpress.ca)), conduct email campaigns to existing customers prior to special occasions such as Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day. "Viewers can see exactly what the gift baskets look like and then quickly link to our website to place an order," points out Jennifer. "We always notice an immediate surge in sales when these go out."

Some great tips on using eNewsletters can be found at <http://www.e-bc.ca/pages/resources/emarketing/e-newsletters.php>.

### **Online Advertising**

Placing ads on search engines and third party websites is an alternative to traditional advertising in newspapers and other media. Online ads can appear almost instantly (compared to print ads with long lead time); you can make adjustments – add a coupon offer to your ad, for example, without waiting for someone at the print shop to get around to doing the artwork. You don't pay for printing or distribution; in fact, with some search engines you pay only when someone actually clicks on your ad. And you can track the results. Online advertising will only be effective however, when it is well targeted. Therefore, carefully research the readership where you are looking to advertise.

### **Research Prospects and Find Bid Opportunities**

Becoming comfortable with simple Internet research can help you in many ways. Simply "Googling" *Day Spas in Jonesville*, for example, can pull up businesses you may not know existed that you could contact as suppliers, or assess as competition. Major organizations and government ministries, including the Government of Canada, use the Internet for posting contracts and communicating with potential suppliers (see [www. http://www.contractsCanada.gc.ca/en/biddin-e.htm](http://www.contractsCanada.gc.ca/en/biddin-e.htm))

A survey done in 2007 by the leading management consulting firm, McKinsey, showed that two-thirds of global marketers were using digital tools for product development and online advertising. By 2011, 11 percent of those surveyed expect to be spending the majority of their advertising budgets online.

Studies continue to show that Canada has one of the fastest growing populations of Internet users in the world. Now is the time to ensure you're using the Internet in the right way for your business and staying abreast of new online tools as they become available. All examples cited are BC business owners who have been profiled at Women's Enterprise Centre events or workshops

*Around the corner or around the province, Women's Enterprise Centre is helping women start, grow, and succeed in business by offering business advisory services, business skills training, business loans, resources, publications and referrals.*

*Call us at 1.800.643.7014 or email [inquiry@womensenterprise.ca](mailto:inquiry@womensenterprise.ca) from anywhere in BC.*