



Five Keys to Getting Customers

You don't need a million dollar ad budget to make a profit. You just need a solid strategy and a little creativity to turn potential customers into repeat buyers.

Identify Your Target Audience

If you're selling coffeemakers, you can rule out teenagers from your audience. A first-person shooter can be geared toward young males as your primary target audience but research shows older men are also playing these types of video games.

Make a list to determine who your target audience is. Be very specific in finding your audience.

If you're opening a clothing store for women, you have a good idea of who you're going to be trying to reach. But what kind of clothing does your store sell?

If it's petite sizes only, your target audience is made up of petite sized women. If your store sells petite sizes for teens, your target audience is now petite young ladies in high school.

Know Where to Advertise

Are you a small company who caters to your town's citizens or are you exclusively an online company that sells products over the Internet? Knowing where to advertise and targeting your audience go hand in hand.

Using the clothing store example above, if you're looking to advertise to young women in high school, the local newspaper isn't going to cut it. However, if the high school has a newspaper, that's where you can wisely spend your ad dollars.

A TV commercial airing during the local news may get a few parents interested in the store but a commercial airing in a local commercial break on MTV is the better choice.

Coupon or Special Offer

Get customers in the door quickly with a coupon or special offer. It doesn't have to be a four-color fancy coupon. A simple black and white coupon will do or a bold line that says, "Mention this ad and receive 10% off."

Cross promotions are another way to make excellent use of coupons and special offers. Page 2 of this article has full details.

Cross Promotion

Cross promoting your company is a highly-effective way to promote your business no matter what your advertising budget.

Take a look at recent Swiffer commercials that feature clips from Cinderella. Disney has paid \$150 million to help promote the Cinderella Special Edition DVD release.

Swiffer commercials show a mom struggling to clean her floor while her daughter watches Cinderella on TV. From the TV comes a solution to the mom's cleaning problem and with some Cinderella-like magic, the mom can now clean her floor with a Swiffer product.

You can do this too without the \$150 million budget. You start by knowing what businesses support your own.

Let's say you own a prom dress shop. People who come to buy prom dresses will need their hair done. Now you've got a beauty shop on your list.

They like to have their picture taken. Now you've got a portrait studio on your list.

They get corsages from their dates who also rent tuxedos from your shop. Now you've got a florist on your list.

Approach these companies for a cross promotion. You can choose to advertise together or, at the very least, you can agree to swap fliers that will be displayed at each other's store locations.

An even better solution is to offer customers a discount for doing business with you and the company you're cross promoting with. Offering customers something as simple as 10-percent off for buying a dress from you and getting their hair done at the salon can increase your sales.

Your dress shop could even offer a coupon good for a free corsage on prom night with one tuxedo rental. These little bonus offers can really rack up your sales.

Don't Forget the Basics

Location, hours, phone, fax, Email and Web site address are all key information so include them in all of your materials. It may seem obvious but sometimes people get so caught up in the selling message, they actually forget their core information that's vital to the sale.

Getting customers in the door is one of the biggest hurdles you'll face as a business owner. Using these five keys gives you a clear advantage over your competitors that will help grow your company no matter how long you've been in business.