



12 No Cost or Low Cost Marketing Ideas to Promote Your Business

1. Be different. What is special about your business? Spend some time to create a USP that makes you stand out. Are you cheaper / faster/ more convenient? Work out what it is about you that would most appeal. Customers need to be able to have a simple reason to choose you rather than somebody else.
2. Don't compete - create. Never bad mouth other companies in the area it will only damage you. Instead spend time looking at what they do and ask – could I do it better? Use their experiences to make your business better.
3. Become involved in the local community – you could offer 'in kind' sponsorship to a local newspaper's award or section; send regular news releases or taking part in events such as the local carnival etc. Become better known.
4. Your promotional material should be about what your customers want – not about you. Instead of a glossy brochure, could you write an expert report of how your customers can overcome an important problem? Printed out it won't cost you much, as a PDF it won't cost you a penny.
5. Regularly ask your customers for their feed-back and opinions. This can be at key times (such as just after joining) or on a 6 monthly regular basis. It is good when you get praise – but even better when they point out something you do which could be better. Any comment you receive from a customer is a result. Accept criticism and learn from it. Use positive comments in your marketing but negative comments can save you a great deal of lost future business.
6. Be consistent in any promotional material that you produce. By being clear about your image or branding from the start and repeating it in everything you do, you make the most of a limited budget as people are more likely to remember your message over time. Being consistent in your approach and appearance can more than double its effectiveness over time – but won't cost you a penny.

7. Perception is reality. If the perception of customers is that you have a dirty building - then you have a dirty building. Once a negative view starts, it's difficult to stop so create a system to spot problems early and act on them.
8. Regularly communicate to customers the things that you do. This can be via your website blog, e-mail notice board or regular newsletters. It's better to communicate too much and in different forms than not enough.
9. Find the gaps. Look at what your customers are currently buying from you and compare that to what you offer. The gaps are called opportunities and will be generally the easiest and most profitable sales that you ever make.
10. Operate a referral policy. Encourage customers to recommend their friends' or even their customers to use your services. Simply decide when it's a good time for you to ask, and create a system to do that regularly.
11. What about your company is the most visual aspect? Is it your uniform, your building, your colourful products your call centre? Decide what stands out and use these images in your brochure, website etc. Where possible pictures of people work best.
12. Never stop promoting yourself – even if you are busy. It is always better to have a waiting list than spaces, and you must never rest upon your past achievements, because you never know when a new business like yours will open near you. Put aside some time each week to promote your company.

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