

ADVERTISING MARKETING AND PROMOTION

A Course in Design Production

By Pat Shirley-Becker AIFD TMFA



Professional Certified Florists' Program

PUBLISHED BY

Texas State Florists' Association

PO Box 170760; Austin TX 78717

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Advertising Marketing and Promotion

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nothing has changed! Although the floral marketplace has become highly sophisticated and competitive including floral businesses of all kinds: traditional retailers, mass marketers, specialty shops, wedding and special events. Even street vendors are competing for these dollars. Consumers are as cost and quality conscious as ever. Young adults and baby boomers make up the largest portion of today's market. They are highly service-oriented and want the most for their hard earned money.

The basics remain the same. Keep this in mind, we provide two things (as do all businesses): product and service, either to fill needs or through created demand.

In selecting the proper advertising medium, we must keep the consumer in mind. How does our product or service meet their needs and/or demand? Florists must be committed to a solid marketing plan designed for their individual businesses. They must also invest in a strong promotional effort to communicate their shop's image, product orientation and price level to the desired targeted market.

A multitude of advertising media is available with which to build a promotional campaign. Store newsletters, brochures, websites, emails and even social networking have become popular methods of communicating regularly with established and perspective clientele.

A decision should be made based on strategies tailored to the overall marketing plan for the shop. Business goals must first be outlined and a niche within the marketplace must be established. The target market must also be determined, a promotional budget and calendar must be organized.

This business's promotional campaign should be supported by publicity and public relations efforts. Using this information as a guide and modifying the information will assist in providing the business owner with the tools needed to build a successful business in the retail floral industry.

II. DEFINITIONS AND DIFFERENCES

Advertising is a form of communication used to influence individuals to purchase products or services. Advertising is often focused on one particular product or service. Thus, an advertising plan for one product might also be very different than that for another product. Advertising is typically done with signs, window displays, brochures, direct mailings, websites, social networking and personal contact.

Promotion keeps the product in the minds of the customer and helps stimulate demand for the product. Promotion involves ongoing advertising and publicity. The ongoing activities of advertising, sales and public relations are often considered aspects of promotions. Promotion sells the "idea" of flowers with the hope of an eventual sale and profit. Example: Offering in-store design classes. This is a great way to promote a new product, flower, design, or theme and spark the interest in your shop. Marketing is the wide range of activities involved in making sure that you're continuing to meet the needs of your customers and getting value in return. Marketing is used to create the customer, to keep the customer and to satisfy the customer. Research is to determine what groups of potential customers exist, what their needs are, which of those needs you can meet, and how you should meet them, etc. Then you must analyze the competition, position your new product or service (find your market niche), and price your products and services. Finally, promote the product through continued advertising, promotions, public relations and sales.

Public Relations includes ongoing activities to ensure the overall company has a strong public image. Public relations activities include helping the public to understand the company and its products. Often, public relations are conducted through the media, that is brochures, magazines, social networking, etc. Public relations is often considered as one of the primary activities included in promotion.

III. SUCCESSFUL ADVERTISING

The goal of advertising today has changed, but it is as crucial to a business's success as it ever has been. It is as important as ever, as necessary as ever and more mandatory for a proper marketing mix than any time in history. Before committing ourselves and our monies to any particular approach, we should take into consideration the following:

How do we obtain desired results?

How can we best attract consumer attention?

How can we easily promote our products and services?

How can we gain the desired result?

After we decide how, where, when, and what, we should consider the four basics to successful advertising.

1. Be informative: Make sure the ad tells the consumer what they need to know. What is on sale, the price, any specific details, length of sale, delivery policies, the benefit of the product, and where the product can be acquired.
2. Be honest: Be sure that so called, "loss leaders"(those items which have been advertised just to get customers to call or come into the shop) are what they are supposed to be. The customer will be disappointed, perhaps angry, if you do not live up to your end of the bargain.
3. Be professional.
4. Track effectiveness of your advertising.

CONSIDERATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL ADVERTISING

In developing an effective advertising program for today's market there are several key factors, which must be taken into consideration.

MARKET: Determine the overall profile of your market, your current and prospective customer base. What is your potential customer's geographical location to home and work? What are the economic income level, average age, and the major job market in the area? Consider these questions when developing your advertising strategy.

MERCHANDISING: What type of merchandise do you sell? Do other shops carry the same product? What makes the presentation of your merchandise unique? Why might a customer come to your shop verses a competitor's?

Do you have creative window displays that are updated regularly? The customer only has 11 seconds to view your window display from a passing vehicle.

Your merchandise should be creatively displayed, well lit with the proper lighting (fluorescent light flattens warm colors and skintones), Halogens or good quality spots will define the area and set off your display.

Are you familiar with your competition? Today's customers demand service and will go where "they can find it". Define your area of expertise and build upon this.

DAILY OPERATIONS: Where is your store located? Is the exterior attractive? Is your sales staff educated and trained in the art of providing service? Are they knowledgeable about your product, as well as policies and procedures? Do you promote continuing education for all employees? Remember: Your employees are key factors in advertising your business.

IV. ESTABLISH ADVERTISING GOALS

1. Emphasize your image in the community
2. Target specific products
3. Increase store traffic with promotions

By planning your advertising a year in advance, you can take full advantage of many “package deals” available. Contracts are usually required to purchase a block of space or time. Be aware when signing Long Term agreements.

V. DEVELOP A PLAN

Developing a plan consisting of a budget and the schedule of advertising will allow you consistency in your approach to a successful year.

Identify the most important selling periods in a calendar year. In addition, during peak times, it is suggested that a progressive retailer target times between holidays when business tends to be slower.

Keep accurate records of all advertising expenditures and the results you received from each ad and monitor your calendar, repeat or revise as needed in the future.

The quality and consistency of your advertising exposes your customer base to multiple impressions of your business, your store, your image and especially, your quality. The designs of your ad can characterize your store and create your image. Through consistency, your credibility is reinforced as well as your quality and professionalism.

VI. DEVELOPING THE ADVERTISING BUDGET

Progressive retailers today who spend an average of 4-5% on their annual advertising, while maintaining tight controls on other cost factors of their businesses, enjoy a comfortable net profit at the end of the year. As a parallel, it is interesting that the average retail florist today spends only 1-2%, if that, in advertising, then wishes he could find a net profit.

1. **ESTABLISH A YEARLY SALES VOLUME GOAL:** To effectively accomplish this, you must first consider:
 - Total sales from previous years
 - Amount of growth expected
 - Anticipated expansion
 - Product lines to be broadened
 - Inflation
 - Current or projected economic conditions
 - Your competition

2. DIVIDE YOUR YEARLY SALES VOLUME GOAL INTO THE 12 MONTHS OF THE YEAR:

Based on floral industry statistics, the following percentages represent the amount of your advertising budget to be used per month.

Jan 5%	May 14%	Sept 5%
Feb 11%	Jun 5%	Oct 6%
Mar 7%	Jul 4%	Nov 10%
Apr 10%	Aug 4%	Dec 17%

Based on the above percentages, advertising dollars are spent during peak times. Current thinking says that it is also wise to invest advertising dollars during the slower periods of the year to promote and to draw customers into your shop on a more consistent basis.

3. DETERMINE YOUR YEARLY BUDGET

In the floral industry, the progressive retailers should be spending between 4-5% of his annual sales volume goal. It should be noted, however, that this percentage will vary, depending on the following factors.

- Type of business you are in: Floral only or flowers and gifts
- Your pricing policy: Traditional versus high end, shop location, and accessibility
- Amount of walk-ins in your area as well as drive by traffic
- Awareness of competition: their advertising spending and media used
- Your anticipated growth: new location, more square footage
- Expanded product lines
- Age and reputation of your business: If shop is new, it will require more advertising to become recognized
- Actual dollars needed for various media in your market
- Consumer buying habits
- New trends, ideas and concepts which could affect your market

Be sure to include donations, window display costs and flowers used for promotional purposes in the advertising budget.

MONITORING THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

It is most important that you track the results of your advertising. The use of coupons in print media would be an excellent way to monitor the number of responses you received. On other forms of advertising, you could keep track by asking the caller how they heard about you, or the "special" they might be ordering.

In running an effective advertising campaign, it is important that you know the break-even point, that is, you will see the amount of dollars invested in your ad compared with the results that ad generated, and the number of items you need to sell in order to break even.

The following are the steps involved in this simple but important system.

1. What are your Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) in the item you are promoting? Everything from the flowers, wire, tape, ribbon, to the labor MUST be included in order to determine a true picture.
2. The labor is now subtracted from the actual selling price of the item you are promoting. This will recall your “contributing margin” which is the amount of dollars you will realize which will help defray your general operation costs, including the costs of the ad itself.
3. The cost of the advertisement is now divided by the contributing margin for each piece. This will reveal the number of items you must sell in order to break even.

EXAMPLE:

Advertising Cost:	\$300.00
Retail Price of arrangement:	\$30.00
COGS plus labor	\$15.00

Contribution Margin \$15 (on each design) Divide \$300 by \$15 and you will see that you need to sell 20 designs before you can break even.

Always strive for a sales goal from your advertising dollars. When you follow the preceding formula; you will always know the goal you are attempting to reach.

VII. ADVERTISING MEDIA

Few of us realize the wide range of advertising media from which we have to choose in planning our marketing strategy. There are many different types. In selecting the proper advertising media, we must keep the customer in mind.

DIRECT MAIL is a form of advertising that can be used with great success by retail florists. Compiling a quality mailing list is one of the key steps in the process of preparing an effective direct mail campaign. Direct mail offers several key advantages. It allows the ability to personalize direct mail to a very specific audience. Additionally, the size of the audience is controllable. Another advantage of direct mail is the ability to tailor each ad to the needs and desire of the selected audience. It is also relatively noncompetitive and has a more lasting value than other advertising media, as it may remain in customers' homes for days or weeks, serving as constant reminders of the shop and its services. All of these advantages combined with the ease and speed with which these ads can be prepared makes direct mail a useful part of a shop's advertising program. It is most useful with computerized customer accounts.

When totaling the expenses involved in using direct mail, the cost per unit of circulation can be high. The cost of postage is frequently the greatest expense involved.

NEWSLETTERS, STATEMENT STUFFERS, AND FLIERS provide an opportunity to disseminate more information by using any size paper and may be printed on either one or both sides. They may include coupons, reply cards or order forms. Newsletters are a good way to maintain positive public relations with established or potential customers. The definition of publicity says that it is “news” rather than advertising. Articles could be developed, discussing new inventory, employee biographies, activities with which the shop is involved,

and/or flower care and handling tips. This type media may be included in a statement, folded or sealed and addressed on the outside.

CATALOGUES are complete, illustrated guides to the entire product selection of a business. They can be effectively used to promote sales for major floral holidays. There is usually a high production cost in creating a catalogue.

RADIO is said to be one of the best forms of advertising. Although it is expensive in some markets, it has proven to be the most effective in getting the desired results. Some radio stations offer trade agreements where, in exchange for their air time, flowers are given as the need arises. If you select this method, be sure that your message will reach the particular group of listeners for which it is intended.

STORE FRONT LOGO leaves a lasting impression at a relatively low cost. People often identify you by your particular logo.

DELIVERY VEHICLES have two functions. The most evident is to transport your merchandise. However, always remember that it is an advertising vehicle also. Using your logo re-enforces your image. Drivers should be neat, clean and if possible, wearing some type of uniform or logo to make your identity statement at the destination.

YELLOW PAGES used for advertising should be given a great deal of consideration, particularly by the florist located in a large city, as there are many florists using this same advertising method. Your ad should be simple and bold with specialty services noted. The usual contract is per year.

THE TELEPHONE is an advertising tool that you can use during your "on hold message" to remind your customers of services you offer, promotions or specials. Many find this to be a very effective means of advertising.

WORD OF MOUTH advertising may enhance your business. Positive comments about your product and service, passed among friends, can generate enthusiasm and desire to try your shop.

YOUR PRODUCT is your most effective means of advertising. The freshness, quality, price, and artistic design are your best and worst advertisers. Complimentary arrangements with your shop logo placed in businesses, hotels, restaurants, banks and other professional offices may lead to sales by those who see and appreciate your artistry and design.

SCHOOL NEWSPAPERS AND YEARBOOKS are one of the poorest forms of advertising and considered by some, to be a waste of money. You may want to consider this as a donation rather than advertising.

THANK YOU NOTES are used to follow up after major purchases, first-time visits, and consultations. These custom cards are effective in creating good will. Their personal nature and positive message help create a favorable impression of the shop from which it is sent.

A WEB SITE can give far more information than can be delivered by standard media advertising. Your web site may offer information, company history, store policies, new product announcements, contests, product selection and the ability to order product online at any time of the day.

The INTERNET has changed advertising's purpose and its strength. Rather than making advertising in the traditional media weaker, the Internet has made it stronger. You must be aware of the new power of advertising

E-NEWSLETTER is a newsletter sent to a customer based list of email addresses. This can be interactive, equipped with links to the shop's home page and showcase your shop's beautiful designed products.

SOCIAL NETWORKING is the process of promoting your site or business through social media channels and it is a powerful strategy that will get you links, attention and massive amounts of traffic. Social networking involves a variety of online tools that can be used by people and organizations to quickly share a great deal of information at very little cost. These tools include Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. There is no other low-cost promotional method out there that will easily give you large numbers of visitors, some of whom may come back to your website again and again.

A BLOG is the social media voice of your business. It may be a diary of your Day. Your blog may bolster your brand, who you are and what you do. It can create demand, share educational information, and build credibility for your business.

GUERRILLA ADVERTISING is a "new" form of advertising "catch all phrase" for non traditional advertising campaigns.

VIII. PROMOTIONS

Promotions sell the "idea" of flowers with the hope of eventual sale and profit. The main purpose of a promotion is to create a desire in the mind of the consumer to make a purchase and for you to sell your products and services on a repeat basis.

IMAGINATION is one of the key ingredients in any promotion, as it directly relates to your products and service. It involves your competitive intelligence, the development and usage of signs and the type of media you select.

The value of promotional campaigns can be realized through increased business.

PROMOTIONAL APPEALS

As significant portion of any retail florist's business is the "situational" or special occasion buyer. There are occasions throughout the year, such as Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, Mother's Day and Christmas, as well as special events, such as weddings and funerals, for which people are conditioned to think about flowers. Promotions should take advantage of this, as well as stimulate interest in using flowers at additional times. In addition, promotions should bring more attention to the flower shop. Emotional, price, and educational appeals are important methods of promotion.

There are times in life when flowers are the only appropriate gift. Flowers at funerals are tokens of respect, providing comfort for loved ones. What would a bride be without flowers? Flowers are inherently comforting and human nature consistently falls helpless to the seductive and emotional appeal of flowers. Promotions based on emotion should tell consumers that nothing else will state feelings the way flowers can.

On special occasions, such as Valentine's Day, the demand for flowers is solid; however, the challenge is to promote the use of flowers to make ordinary days special.

Romance, as a sales tool, should never be underestimated. It is a fact that flowers are the undisputed universal symbol of love. Love gives the florist many possibilities for promoting flowers!

PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

In a mass media society, consumers are constantly bombarded with advertising and promotions. The florist must, therefore, strive to create interesting promotions, because consumers easily disregard the mundane. Modern promotions require more impact to be noticed by sophisticated, contemporary consumers.

1. Coupons are certificates that are redeemable for goods or cash discounts. They can be clipped out of local papers, and sent to customers as statement stuffers, newsletters or emailed. These coupons can be effective in persuading customers to try or buy a product and in increasing consumer awareness of the shop. When done properly, coupons can be an effective way for florists to introduce their products and services to new customers.
2. Contests are promotional devices designed to create consumer involvement by offering prizes based on skill or a chance drawing of the entrant. When using contests, keep the rules simple. This may allow frequent purchases by present consumers as they play. In addition, contests may reinforce shop loyalty.
3. Special events are staged and supervised store activities that promote a product, service, or image. Florists should look for opportunities to create special events. These events can attract attention and enhance the shop's image. For example, an open house focusing on certain products that enhance the theme.

In order to evaluate the performance of a promotional campaign, detailed records must be kept. A promotion must be given an adequate amount of time to determine whether or not it is successful. Carefully planned promotions can bring much financial success and increase the visibility of the floral shop, paving the way for future sales. With creative ideas and a controlled budget, a well planned floral promotion will bring flowers and customers together.

IX. PLAN AHEAD

The following guidelines are designed to provide an outline to assist you in planning ahead.

1. All promotions should be planned well in advance of the event, in order to have sufficient time to advertise. It also allows time to make any necessary arrangements for specialty props and plan for staff.
2. Define the shop image and customer base.
3. Define promotional objectives.
4. Decide what products and services to promote.
5. Prepare the promotional calendar
6. Analyzing the competition
7. Developing a promotional budget
8. Plan the promotional campaign
9. Merchandise the event. Plan in-store displays alerting the customer as to what is coming up. Follow through with promotional window displays. Send out newsletters, emails, and statement stuffers.
10. Develop a checklist detailing all of the jobs that can be done and by whom.
11. Send press releases. Invite the media.
12. Involve children. Special activities will keep them involved while mom and dad shop.
13. Extend the promotion for more than just one day, as this provides more flexibility for all customers.
14. Public relations, also a form of promotion, putting both you and your product before the public. Consider speaking to various groups and giving demonstrations to schools, garden clubs, etc.

X. COMMERCIAL ACCOUNTS

A view of the future-positions commercial accounts as extremely high visibility, large volume, and reliable paying accounts. Each satisfied customer in an office or complex is a tremendous source of future business and is able to place your work in front of potential customers who may not ordinarily see your creativity and be exposed to that creativity, quality and service.

The list of prospects is unlimited. Banks, attorneys, hotels, restaurants, hair salons, spas, professional and medical offices are always good prospects.

How do we obtain commercial accounts? Set aside a scheduled time each week to make calls. You will need to speak with the person (should know his/her name and title) in charge of making the decision to place the order

Sending the person "in charge" a creative and long lasting arrangement, along with a brochure of your store and business card, will identify you. Make the appointment so that you visit while the arrangement is still fresh. Always do your homework! Know all you can about the company before your meeting.

Suggestions for placement of flowers based upon company design will re-enforce your professional skills. Ideas include lobby, reception area, individual offices and boardroom for weekly product. Also for their employees and customers, flowers for birthdays, anniversaries, births, and hospital selections might be proposed. Offering special billing to meet a business's needs might be important. Also offering world-wide delivery may be

an additional perk for a business.

XI. MARKETING

Marketing is part art, part science, and part business. Because it is such a subjective thing, there are a few hard and fast rules. Here are five new ones to guide you in your quest to boost your profits with a minimum investment.

The five new marketing rules:

1. The 10/30/60 Rule

There are three markets: “universe”, prospects, and current customers.

- The largest market and the one that represents the least profits is called your “universe”. It comprises everyone in your market area regardless of whether those consumers match your business’s customers profile. An aggressive marketer will invest 10 percent of their marketing budget talking to their universes, attempting to move those consumers into their second largest market, one that ranks in the middle for generating profits.
- That market is called your prospects—those members of your universe who do not fit your customer profile. Again, an aggressive marketer will invest 30 percent of their budgets in an effort to nudge those people into their third market — their current consumers, who are easily their most lucrative source of profits, especially in a down economy.
- At this point, investing 60 percent of their marketing budgets to their current customers is necessary, knowing it costs them one-sixth as much to make a sale to an existing customer as it does to market to a prospective customer. By investing the most in the market that produces the most profits yet costs the least to reach, maximizes your marketing investment.

2. The 1/10/100 Rule

While marketing to current customers is highly beneficial, marketing investments in other areas are even more worthwhile. The rule that guides where we put our time and money dictates that \$1 spent communicating with our own staff is equivalent to \$10 spent communicating with the trade and \$100 spent talking to our customers. Never overlook the marketing power of your own people.

3. The Rule of Thirds

Almost every smart small-business owner is now marketing online. We have learned to invest one-third of our online marketing budgets in designing and posting our web sites, making them look attractive and simple to find. We invest another third to attract people to our sites, knowing we must market our sites offline is a key to succeeding with them online. The final third is used to improve and maintain the sites, keeping them fresh and fascinating.

4. The Rule of Twice.

Even though the price of technology is dropping and will continue to drop, you have to face the reality that it will cost you double what you think it will to remain competitive online as technologies advance and evolve. And you are kidding yourself if you think you don’t have to do it.

5. The Rule of the Ruler

- As a business owner, you may think you're too busy to run your marketing show. You may have delegated the marketing functions to a designated professional.
- While you can delegate the function, you can't delegate the passion and vision, making it necessary for you to take command of the process and keep your eyes on it all along the way. Follow this rule, and you will never be led astray by well-meaning but misguided marketing types, whose goals may not be the same as yours.

Marketing is about gaining the maximum exposure for a shop, event, product or service with the minimum amount of cash. Instead of a big budget, marketers rely on time, energy, and information. Many retail entrepreneurs are in a great position to use holidays for promoting their businesses. Every month has a holiday except August. And if you don't find one that fits, make one up: National Haircut Day, Treat a Dog Day, or Buy Roses for No Reason Day for instance. These types of theme days can even get you extra media coverage, so be sure to let the media know about your made-up holiday and promotion. This type of marketing is known as "guerrilla marketing".

Time is money. It is a common adage. However time is not money; It is far more valuable. If you run out of money, you can always generate more. If you run out of time, you can never generate more. Time can be more beneficial to your business—and your life—than money ever could.

So what does this have to do with marketing? Easy. Americans revere time above all else, and anything you can do to conserve their time will be greatly appreciated and repaid in the form of repeat business. Another way of saying that is "If you waste other people's time by taking too much of it, or ask them to wait when they're in a hurry, you're not geared for the value that is placed on time, and you'll lose customers".

Americans cherish time most. So the way you conduct your business today must be evaluated in the light of time conservation for your market, not only as you plan for daily business and holidays.

The most important things you need to know about marketing:

1. Commitment: A mediocre marketing program with commitment will always prove more profitable than a brilliant marketing program without commitment. Commitment will make it happen.
2. Investment: Marketing is not an expense but an investment.
3. Consistent: It takes a while for prospects to trust you. Repetition is a great ally.
4. Confident: In a nationwide survey to determine why people buy, price came in fifth, selection fourth, service third, quality second; and, in first place they patronize businesses in which they feel confident.
5. Patient: Unless the person running your marketing is patient, it will be difficult to practice commitment, view marketing as an investment.
6. Assortment: Individual marketing ideas rarely work on their own, but a wide assortment of marketing tools is required.
7. Convenient: People now know that time is not money—it's far more valuable than money. Respect this by being easy to do business with and run your company for the convenience of your customers, not yourself.
8. Subsequent: The real repeat and referral business.
9. Amazement: There are elements of your business that you take for granted, but prospects would be amazed if they knew details. Be sure all of your marketing always reflects that amazement. It's always there.

10. Measurement: You can actually double your profits by measuring the results of your marketing.
11. Involvement: This describes relationship between you and your customers. You prove your involvement by following up; they prove theirs by patronizing and recommending you.
12. Dependent: Your job is not to compete with other shops, but to cooperate with them. Market them in return for them marketing you. Set up tie-ins with others. Become dependent to market more and invest less.
13. Armament: is defined as “the equipment necessary to wage and win battles”. The armament is technology: computers, current software, mobile phones, pagers, fax machines.
14. Consent: In an era of nonstop interruption marketing, the key to success is to first gain consent from consumers to receive your marketing materials, then market only to those who have given you that consent. Don’t waste money on people who don’t give it to you.
15. Augment: To succeed online, augment your Web site with offline promotion, constant maintenance of your site, participation in news groups and forums, e-mail, chat-room attendance, posting articles, hosting conferences and rapid follow-up.

POWER OF GENERATIONAL MARKETING

- The method of marketing to a specific generation is affecting the way that we promote and sell products and services. We are all a product of our generation. Each generation have their own characteristics, because of this as a marketing target, we can usually categorize generations by the way that we act and speak as well as our belief systems.

They include:

1. Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964
 2. Generation X born between 1965 and 1980
 3. Gen Y or Millennials born between 1980 and 2001
- In order to market effectively to a generation you must find a way to grab their attention, by using a message that resonates with them. Generational determined lifestyles and social values exercise as much influence on buying and purchasing as more commonly understood demographic factors like income, education, and gender.

To succeed in generation marketing, you must understand how the motivation of your consumers correlate with the underlying values of their generation. When you know this you are able to customize your message with you products, services, and communication to their needs and desires.

Of course, every generation ultimately will pass through the same life stages, from youth to old age. As the younger generations find their place in society as consumers, employees and parents, it becomes more and more important for businesses to acknowledge this soon-to-be powerful demographic. Build brand loyalty with them now, and you may reap the results for the rest of their lives.

If you have not already explored generation marketing, perhaps it’s time to visit this method of marketing as part of your own marketing and advertising mix.

CREATING A MARKETING CALENDAR

A marketing calendar is an integral part of a successful marketing plan, and a savvy retailer won't wait until after the holidays to create a marketing calendar for the new year. Pre-holiday rush is a good time to start formulating new plans as well as to assess which of the past year's marketing efforts worked and bear repeating.

It may take several years to develop a perfect marketing calendar, but once done, it will be one of a store's most precious assets.

You'll have more than a hundred ways to market your business and most of them are free, so it's important to know just when you'll be doing that marketing. There are several important reasons to write a marketing calendar:

- So you can plan ahead and be ready to fire
- So you don't overlook opportunities
- So you can get suppliers to participate
- So your team knows what will be happening and when
- So that you can schedule enough staff for peak times
- So you can kick off holiday promotions
- So you can promote an anniversary sale
- So you can take advantage of special events
- So you can participate in manufacturer promotions
- So you can schedule warehouse or truckload sales
- So you can qualify for additional co-op and promotional funds

A Marketing Calendar is very simple. You can set one up in Excel in a matter of minutes. It has four columns and either 12 rows (one for each month) or 52 rows (one for each week of the year). Depending on your business, a monthly plan may be good enough, but if you sell seasonal items like, you might want to plan at least week to week.

The first column is called "Month" or "Week" and lists the number of each.

The second column is titled, "Thrust", and identifies the thrust of your marketing that week or month. Is it a sale, a new product, or a seasonal theme? This is where you list it.

The third column, "Media", lists the media you'll be using that week or month.

The fourth column is where you transform yourself into a college professor and give a letter grade to that week, depending on profits. Did it earn an A, or did it get a measly D?

At the end of the year, review your calendar before making a new one and eliminate the things you did that earned anything other than an A or B. It takes several years to develop a perfect calendar, one that's loaded with A's. Once you have it, keep it under lock and key, because it will be one of your most precious business assets.

Armed with a marketing plan and a marketing calendar, you're almost ready to move forward into taking action. You know what you must do, what you want your plan to accomplish for you, and when you must do it. That means you're primed to attack, succeed, and profit. So far this has cost you no money, only your time and imagination.

Marketing Calendar for Florists

MONTH	THRUST	MEDIA	RESULTS
JANUARY	Store Anniversary Sale	Window Signs, Newspaper	A
FEBRUARY	Valentine's Day	Roses and Gifts Promotion	A
MARCH	Garden and Bedding Plants	Val-Pak Coupons	B
APRIL	Easter	Egg Hunt Party	A
MAY	Mother's Day	Newspaper Ad	A
JUNE	Father's Day Graduation, Wedding	Campus Newspaper Bridal Shop	B
JULY	Independence Day	Store Dressing	C
AUGUST	Back-To School Gift Baskets	Flyers Under Dorm Doors, Campus "Welcome" Packet	B
SEPTEMBER	Football Themed Arrangement	Coupon Dist at Football Game	B
OCTOBER	Halloween	Costumed Employee with Sign	A
NOVEMBER	Thanksgiving	Turkey Shoot Drawing	A
DECEMBER	Christmas Ornaments, New Year's Party Decorating	Store Dressing Extended Hours	A

To maintain your current customer base and convert new customers into repeat customers today - and not lose them to your competitors, you must employ speed in your business at every opportunity: customer service, deliveries, contact with callers, telephone on-hold time, requests for information and everywhere else you can insert it into your business. Competing and winning in the arena of time will be the most potent marketing strategy of the next years and probably forever.

XII. SUMMARY

Advertising, promotions and marketing will pay dividends when carefully planned. Decide the proper time when advertising, what to sell and to whom. The media and the amount of money spent are prime considerations for an effective advertising campaign.

Keep in mind, advertising is the visible part of your business. Your business will be judged by the merchandise and services you offer. Quality is more effective than quantity.

In any promotional effort, the fringe benefits are new customers, and free publicity. Careful planning, creative promotion and a variety of wonderful merchandise will make every occasion worth celebrating.

Marketing is about gaining the maximum exposure for your business, event, product, or service with the minimum amount of outlay. Instead of a big budget, marketers rely on time, energy, information and knowledge to draw the crowd.