

Success Tip #1: Making Your Business Look BIGGER to Your Customers

IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK NOT TO LOOK SMALL

Certain things will make your company look and feel small to investors and customers. By avoiding these easy to fix traps, you can go a long way in making your company appear more mature. First you must understand that every piece of paper and every word or graphic you present to your customers or potential investors will cause them to judge your professionalism. No detail is too small. No mistake is unimportant when you are building your reputation. The following details are especially important:

- ✚ You need to have an effective website with minimal text that tells the customer what he needs to know without making him dig for it. Don't have typos and poor grammar on your site. Make sure your text can be read easily and can be printed off your website. Your website should be easy to navigate and have only that information which your customer needs to move to the next step, which is to contact you directly.
- ✚ You must have well-written and tightly focused sales collateral, which easily and quickly spells out your products and offerings. There should be no typos or grammatical errors. Don't underestimate the importance of this. You should hire a professional writer to write your sales and marketing collateral.
- ✚ You need formal, graphically designed company stationary and logo. All communications should represent your company's own particular style.
- ✚ Every presentation you make to your customer should be well crafted on a PowerPoint design template that has been created specifically for your company.
- ✚ Even if your organization is small, it should be organized to look big. This means you should not have a flat organization. A flat organization, by design, keeps a company from growing. On your website you should have bios for each of the company's officers. The more officers your company has, the more mature you will look. You might want to consider contracting with professional consultants to fill important VP slots until you can hire someone permanently.

PACKAGE YOUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Growing a small business is extremely difficult. During the early days, months, and years; as your business begins to grow; you string together ideas, products, and services to create an enterprise that reflects your own special talents. Somehow you must package this collection of offerings and present potential clients with a reason to buy from you. At some point, hopefully sooner rather than later, you need to take a step back and analyze the packaging to make sure it clearly reflects who you are today.

COMPETE WITH THE BIG BOYS

As you grow your sales revenues and begin to measure yourself against the competition, winning your fair share of the market has its challenges. Larger competitors have the advantage of mature sales and marketing organizations. Even when they have inferior products, these competitors' larger look and feel often sets them ahead of you with customers. Customers may be "sold" on the competitor's "packaging", and buy the wrong product for the wrong reasons. Your challenge is not only to help them understand that your product is the better solution for their needs, but also to sell them on the viability of your organization. Unfortunately, perception is everything, and if your packaging makes you look small it really doesn't matter if you have the best product, sometimes it doesn't even matter if you have the best price. Buyers are often reluctant to do business with a company that looks small and/or immature.

One thing you might want to consider is partnering with a consultant who is willing to serve as your Vice President of Sales and Marketing on a temporary basis. By doing this, you round out your organizational landscape and reap the benefits of decades of experience without having to pay a VP's salary and benefits until you are financially ready to do so.

ANALYZE YOUR SALES AND MARKETING INFRASTRUCTURE TO BECOME MORE COMPETITIVE

The first step in becoming more competitive is to perform a complete, objective, analysis of your sales and marketing infrastructure. It will be extremely difficult for you to view your business dispassionately and perform an objective assessment. For this reason, you will probably want to look at contracting with outside professionals to perform your assessment. These industry experts have decades of corporate experience in building successful sales and marketing strategies to help them understand your challenges and how to address them.

An outside consultant can provide you with a comprehensive analysis that culminates in a gap analysis and steps to address the holes in your sales and marketing efforts moving forward. Once you have this assessment and know where the gaps are, you can begin to build a sales and marketing plan that will enable your company to effectively win against any and all competitors, big or small. You can either perform the steps to execute the plan internally, or hire outside expertise to perform those functions that you don't have the knowledge and experience to perform. This straightforward and easy to implement process will get your company on the fast track to more sales.

GETTING STARTED: DON'T HIRE PERMANENT EMPLOYEES!

The catch 22 is this: you need help to compete with the big boys, but you can't afford to hire and maintain the type of staff your bigger competitors have. How do you compete?

Eventually, as you reach your sales and revenue goals and meet the growth expectations you have put into place, you will be able to hire the expertise you need for all aspects of

your successful business. However, hiring permanent personnel is not usually the best option in the early stages of your business plan. Permanent employees will cost you much more in the form of benefits and taxes and must be paid month after month, even during times when their roles are not needed.

By contrast, outside consultants can be engaged on a project by project basis and generally offer you more expertise than you would be able to afford on a permanent basis. In short, hiring an outside resource provides the expert sales and marketing knowledge capital that allows a “small business” to look and feel like a big company, without accruing the costs that come with being big. By engaging a trained consultant on a project basis, your company gains the added freedom to refocus resources in other areas as your needs change.

START WINNING IN THE MARKETPLACE

Sales and Marketing Pros can guide you through the process of giving your company the look and feel of a much larger organization. SMP’s Opportunity Maximizer Workshop performs a full-scale assessment of your sales and marketing infrastructure and provides you with a gap analysis and steps to close the identified gaps. SMP also offers part or full time Advisory Services, allowing you to just pick up the phone and request help as you need it. SMP is ready to work with you and your team to package your business so that it embraces the future.

Wouldn’t you like to put your competitors in the position of having to explain why their offerings aren’t as good as yours. Once you take away their size, all they have left is their products...and you know you have them beat by a mile there. It’s time to let your customers know that too.

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