

## SMALL BUSINESS MATTERS

Marketing: Best Sales Lead, The Customer In Front of You!

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Every business strives to maintain or increase sales at a satisfactory level. Depending on the nature of the business, various ways are used to promote and advertise your product and services with hopes of increased sales. This includes flyers, mail-outs, road signage, radio, TV, newspaper, and so forth. All are valid depending on the products and services the business offers and who the typical customer is. However, sometimes businesses may forget that their *best sales lead, the customer in front you!*

Let's look at a retail store for example. Many large retailers such as franchises and even some of the smaller retailers already know the power of in-store promotion and impulse purchases. However, some businesses often overlook "point of purchase" sales techniques. Basically, you have got the customer into your business and you have the opportunity to market directly to your customer. So what should you do about it?

Below are some approaches to consider. These may also inspire other ideas of how you may choose to market directly to the customer.

**Appearance** - It is important to ensure quality and strategic use of all the visuals associated with your business that you can use for promotion such as vehicles, external property, interior layout, displays, and signage. Take advantage of all opportunity to promote and be appealing.

**Product and service presentation** - Take opportunities to bundle products/services and have strategic arrangement of the same. For bundling, an example is outdoor deck packages at the hardware store. An example of strategic arrangement is a supermarket having staples such as sugar in the back and impulse products such as ready to eat snacks in the front of the store.

**Product features** - For retailers it is important to make good use of high traffic areas, such as entrances, checkouts, and the main aisles around the store to display various product displays and promotions. Ensure visibility of products of interest they may be added to the typical customer shopping list.

**Keeping it fresh** - In any business the rotation of stock, features, displays, keeping up with the seasons, events and holidays, and regular promotions is important. Even if changing a display from time to time for no other purpose than exposing the regular customers to something new regularly.

**Product/service knowledge and customer service** - Never overlook the act of actually talking to your customer and provide the information they require. It may lead to sales of complimentary products or services.

**Appeal to the senses** - Use to your advantage the power of sight, smell, sound and so on. Food service businesses often use smell, big box stores use the power of sight such as tall displays to the ceiling sometimes called "power walls", and an Irish pub with an outdoor deck may use lively music. The point is, catch the customers attention.

**Be innovative** - Have in store promotions. Examples include "loss leaders" or "crazy deals" selling at deep discounts on one or two everyday common products to increase word of mouth to attract new customers. If you do it regularly and only in-store then you need not worry about having unlimited quantities and will make the customer return to visit the store to check out the latest special. Some businesses use customer loyalty programs from points and discounts accumulated over time to bonus dollars. Anything goes, be creative!

**Learn from others** – Finally, look at other businesses similar to yours, especially major chains or franchises as much effort is expended on direct marketing. See what they are doing!

For more information on business financing and other services of CBDC South Coast call 1-800-303-2232 or 538-3846.