

BuyLocal Marketing Plan Development

PART 1: ASSESSMENT

1. Give a brief overview of your business: its history, what you sell and how you sell (retail, wholesale, through distributors), your location, mission and anything else would be important to introducing your business to a potential new customer.

2. Who do you sell to now (consumers, contractors, distributors, etc.) and in what geographic area?
Who do you want to sell to in the future and in what geographic area?

3. Who are your current best customers? Could you sell more to them through better customer service, learning more about them, or asking them for referrals to potential customers?

4. Who are your current competitors? What do you do better—and what do they do better?

5. What tactics do you currently use to market your business, how much are you spending on them and how effective are they?

Examples of tactics: your website, print (magazine, newspaper) advertising, radio or television advertising, yellow pages ads, brochures, press releases, sales flyers, email campaigns, events such as open houses, professional association or chamber of commerce memberships, trade shows, direct mail, social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), free online listings, or paid online advertising.

Are you currently using the Buy Local theme in your advertising? *The "Buy Local" movement is powerful and resonates across a broad spectrum of consumers. Be sure to take advantage of this by using the Buy Local message on everything from ads to letterhead, envelopes, business cards, receipts, ads and signage.*

PART 2: STRATEGY

6. Review your answers above to formulate a statement of what sets your business apart from others, what makes your business stand out. This is your Unique Selling Proposition (USP). Example: Fedex's USP helped it dominate the package shipping market: *Federal Express: When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight.*

7. What are your marketing goals for the next year? (Increase sales 10%, add 3 new dealers, introduce a new product?) What are your long-term marketing goals?

8. How will you meet your marketing goals? This is your marketing strategy.

PART 3: POSSIBLE TACTICS

9. **Maximizing the appeal of your facility:** Do customers—whether consumers, contractors or distributors—visit your facility? If so, is your property inviting? Is your sign visible and in good repair? Is the landscaping well cared for? Is the facility neat? Are sales staff appropriately attired and welcoming?
10. **Does your website effectively market your business? If not, what needs to be done to improve it?**

Every business should have a website, even if it is a simple one-page site. Your website should showcase what your business is, its products and services; provide contact information as well as information location and hours.
11. **What organization memberships would help you meet your marketing goals?**

Active participation in trade associations provides the opportunity to raise the company's profile in the industry and position key staff members as experts. Also, you may be able to purchase a one-time use of the association's mailing list in order to promote directly to your fellow members.

Chambers of Commerce can be an excellent source of direct business and referrals. While many chambers focus more on tourism, savvy non-tourism businesses can utilize membership to do outreach to businesses, their employees and second homeowners. Be sure to take advantage of any free listings or business promotion.
12. **What trade shows, fairs, home and remodeling or other shows could help market your products and services?**

At a show, it's important to break out of the pack and create a "buzz-worthy" presence. Promotion of your participation should begin prior to the show with a preshow mailer/emailer. Booth design should include strong graphics and opportunities for interactivity by attendees. Giveaways and premiums should be unique and related to your products and differential.
13. **Online/Web-based**
 - Free: **Google Maps** (enter your address at maps.google.com to check your business's placement and information on the maps), **Google Places for Business** (www.google.com/placesforbusiness where you can update your Google Maps information), **Bing Local** (www.bing.com/local/), **YouTube** (where you can post videos about your milling process and products), and membership listings.
 - Paid advertising such as **Google Adwords**; new accounts sometimes qualify for \$100 in free advertising. Adwords would enable you to reach potential customers when the customer is searching for information about the type of products you offer. It also enables you to geo-target, i.e., have the ads only shown to searchers within your local market area (such as within 60 miles of your location). Keyword-targeted campaigns (in which you bid on phrases such as "wholesale lumber" appear on Google.com as text ads under the Sponsored Links heading on search results pages. This is typically pay-per-click advertising, i.e. you only pay if someone clicks on your ad and is taken to your website; it can also be set up as pay-per-call advertising.
 - Social media: **Facebook pages, Twitter.**
 - Email marketing utilizing a solution such as **ConstantContact** (www.constantcontact.com) to send newsletters to your list of current and potential customers. The newsletter could include news on specials, new woods or products you have available, and spotlights on customer-submitted projects. Increase your email list by having the newsletter sign-up on your website automatically add the email address to your contacts list in ConstantContact.
14. **What relationships can you build?**

Those selling to consumers, contractors and other professionals could:

 - Give out "refer a friend/colleague" cards; if a person refers a friend who's not already a customer, they get a percentage off on their next purchase.
 - Contact local schools, organizations or crafts schools that offer woodworking courses. Offer instructors a professional's discount; offer students a discount, as well. Provide an added value to the program, such as addressing the class about buying local, how to choose exotic lumber, how to save money on lumber, etc.

- Be pro-active. If you hear a new development is going in, a cabinetmaker is expanding—something where your products might be used—contact the project leaders.
- Consider special sales just for loyal retail customers.
- Host an annual open house. These could introduce new products (such as new woods), have educational components, and be social events where you can strengthen relationships. Have fun, show your personality and, if possible, include signature food (a bratwurst broil, pig roast or a chicken BBQ, homemade baked goods or a pie smorgasbord) that's so good, guests will want to attend the next event—and bring their friends and associates.
- Sponsor local events or organizations.

Those selling to distributors could:

- Invite top customers to tour the sawmill, using the tour as an opportunity to educate the customer on the manufacturing process as well as the chance to learn what are the customer's "pain points."
- have salespeople visit these customers at their headquarters/offices at least once a year, the sawmill has an opportunity to better understand how the customer works.

15. **Public relations:** Press releases can be a highly effective, low cost method of increasing visibility. (See page 6 for an example of how a press release should be set up.) Be sure to include a photo. Depending on the subject of the release, you could send it to industry press, local press, or specialty publications (home and garden, building and remodeling magazines).

Distribution can be via email. Consider online distribution via PRweb.com or similar service that distributes news to major news sites, search engines, journalists and consumers.

16. **Collateral:** What printed materials would assist in your marketing? Examples, letterhead and envelopes, business cards, product brochures, and sales flyers. Consider creating a one-page introduction to your business—your differential, what you offer, and your contact info. When you meet someone and they ask for information on your business, send it out immediately.
17. **Traditional advertising:** Examples: newspapers, general interest and specialty magazines, radio and television, specialty publications (yellow pages, organization magazines).

PART 4: IMPLEMENTATION

Start by looking over the suggestions above to see what ideas you feel that you want to implement immediately, then determine what resources—staff, money, outside assistance—might be needed to accomplish each tactic. Develop a Excel spreadsheet (or paper graph) like the one shown on the next page to determine what you feel is most important to do right away and what should be done over time, and what resources you'll need to complete them. (We've filled in the fields just as an example. Rank would be 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important.)

Sorting your Excel spreadsheet or list by rank will give you a prioritized plan for moving forward. You'll also see what you need to budget in terms of staff or owner time and dollars.

Tactics	Rank	Resources Needed	Budget/Cost	Timing
On site: landscaping, signage, vehicle signs	1	Staff; signmaker	\$_____	Immediate
Onsite visits by wholesale customers	2	Staff	\$_____	2013
Join trade associations	2	Staff	\$_____	Within 1 month
Website	1	Web development company/agency	\$_____	2–4 months
Google Places for Business	1	Staff or web development company	\$_____	Immediate
Google Adwords	2	Staff and/or web development company/agency	TBD	As budget allows
Facebook	3	Staff and/or web development	\$_____	2–3 months
Constant Contact (CC)	3	Staff and/or web development company/agency	\$15/mo. for CC + cost to develop e-newsletters	Goal: by mid- Nov. for pre- holiday sales
Refer a friend	3	Staff	\$_____	2–3 months
Join local associations	3	Staff	\$_____	2013
Customer service training	1	Staff		Immediate
Press releases	4	Writer who can distribute	\$_____	As time allows
Collateral	2	Staff and/or agency	\$_____	Within 1 month
Local advertising	2	Staff and/or agency	\$_____	1–3 months

Sample Press Release

<YOUR LOGO HERE>

Date (Month, Day, Year)

For Immediate Release

Contact: (Name and phone number of person who can respond to reporters' questions)

5-7 Word Headline

YOUR TOWN, NH – The first paragraph should capture the Who (your company name), Where (your location), What (what the press release/event/promotion is about), When (the event took/will take place), and Why (why this news is of interest/is important).

The press release should generally be 300-500 words and should be double spaced. Include quotes from people involved and accompany the release with a photo. The photo should be of good quality (150dpi for newspapers, 300 dpi for magazines; 72dpi is only appropriate for the web). Be sure to include a photo caption identifying all the people in the photo (see below).

Have the press release proofread, especially phone numbers, web and email addresses.

You can email the release to publications. Be sure to check their website to find out what email address/person you should send the press release to. The subject line of the email is important: It should tell the person the contents: "Press release for immediate distribution: From (Your Business Name)." Typically newspapers run press releases on a "space available" basis, so your press release may not run immediately; plan for this and send your release in at least 1-2 weeks in advance of a special event.

You can end your press release with a paragraph, "For more information about (the event or your business name), contact...." Be sure to include your address, phone number and website address.

- END -

PHOTO CAPTION: John Doe (center) receives the "Business of the Year" award from A Local Chamber of Commerce. Mary Smith, Chamber Director (l.) and Bob Jones, Chamber President (r.).