

Getting Big with Little Marketing

By T. Scott Gross

It's not what you think. It's not price, product, packaging, promotion or place that is the ultimate factor in the buying decision. Nope, it's none of those although each exerts at least some influence. In the end it is how the customer feels about that elusive thing we call your brand.

Your brand is mental real estate that you own in the mind of the customer. Logos are what you see. Brands are what you think. See the logo. Think the brand.

Smart marketers focus solely on what the customers think. Cement the brand proposition in the mind of the market and you have an instant short-cut when it comes to the buying decision. That's what the smart guys do. The really smart ones pay attention to MicroBrands, those little brands that sit on top of big brands and often overpower them!

The branding process is really a matter of sums. Add the Microbrand of the receptionist to the Microbrand of the sales manager to the impression formed by a Yellow Pages ad and pretty soon you've got yourself a brand. And, by the way, a brand can occupy negative mental real estate just as it can have positive power.

A strong brand powers purchases in unbelievable ways. Customers will wait longer, pay more, even settle for less in the name of a brand that owns enough of their mental real estate.

Little Marketing

The best marketing is...come on, you know the answer! Positive word of mouth. Nothing beats one customer telling a potential customer to do business with you. Funny thing, you can't really buy that kind of marketing but you can earn it by following four simple steps.

Have fun.

Involve your product.

Get them to your property.

Do something good for others.

There are other little marketing techniques but these will get you started. For more ideas check out www.tscottgross.com and click over to "MicroBranding™."

Have Fun

What does fun have to do with marketing? Fun gets attention. It cuts through the clutter and draws free media like a magnet. Take for instance the Ft Lauderdale restaurant owner who put bugs on his menu. Bugs turned out to be a shrimp-like seafood from the coast of Africa. The restaurant owner just had to have them...and so did his customers!

Involve Your Product

Listen up. I'm only going to tell you this once. The purpose of all marketing should be to generate trial. If a marketing event doesn't involve the product, don't do it!

One of the most successful promotions in the airline business is the Southwest

Airlines Friends Fly Free promotion. Why? Because it gets trial! People who would not have flown at all find themselves with a free ticket when their friend buys a full fare ticket. Think about all the business travelers and you will figure out why Friends Fly Free is better than simply cutting the fares in half.

Get Them to Your Property

Whenever possible, involve your property in every promotion. 'Want to sponsor the Little League? Go ahead, but get them to come to your place of business to pick up the registration form.

Do Something Good for Others

This tactic is not limited to nice people. It even works for the scum of the Universe. The principle is simple: When you do something good for others in your promotions not only are you seen as the local good guy but you automatically gain a partner with a vested interest in the success of your promotion.

All Together Now!

When we owned our restaurant we were asked to sponsor a charity walk with a cash contribution. What did we say? No is only part of the answer. Actually we said a qualified yes. Yes, so long as the walk started at our restaurant where we gave each walker a sample of his product. Yes, so long as the two-hour walk started at 9:30am so the walkers would

be back at our place about...11:30 is not the correct answer! And yes, so long as our mascot, the Chicken Man, could lead the march.

Have fun, involve your product, get them to your property, do something good for others and you too will get big with little marketing!

T. Scott Gross is the author of *MicroBranding: Build a Powerful Personal Brand & Beat Your Competition* (Leading Authorities Press, 2001.) Visit his website at tscottgross.com.