

# Boomers Blooming



Sharing Our Experience To Mentor, Educate & Fulfill Your Life Transitions

## Eight Ideas For Attracting Publicity and Promoting Your Business

What's the secret formula for generating publicity for yourself and your business?

It's really quite simple. Be open to ideas. Be an opportunist. Be aware of what's happening in your community, your own area of interest and in the mass media. Capitalize on those events and make news from those stories. Or create good-will publicity stories of your own.

That said, as a small business marketer, your ideas to promote your business are often guided by certain realities:

- Smaller budgets
- Little time
- Limited knowledge about publicity

Your objectives may include:

- Increased visibility and recognition
- Enhanced customer relationships
- More sales or sales inquiries
- More traffic to your store, business or website

Here's how we can help. We scouted our "swipe file" for eight entrepreneurial ideas you can borrow, adapt and apply to your business. Whether you operate a dental clinic, run a gift basket service from your home, or sell doggie fashions over the Internet, you're sure to find an application for one of these simple, inexpensive ideas. We include examples from some larger "brand name" companies, but their efforts only demonstrate how creative thinking can be adapted to your enterprise.

### IDEA 1

### *Start a charitable event and let your customers know about it*

Dr. Brenda Stants was a new dentist looking to build her business in Mississauga. Her first marketing efforts included a simple newsletter dropped off to residential homes in the neighborhood.

Last Christmas she put up a small sign in her office to tell incoming patients that she was collecting small personal items for a local women's shelter. During the next few weeks many of her patients returned with toiletries and toys



for children. The local community newspaper picked up the story and from that, even non-patients from the neighbourhood stopped in to drop off items. The office served coffee and Christmas cheer and earned positive feedback from a new base of potential clients who didn't know of Brenda's practice in the neighborhood. Dr. Brenda's simple effort broke the ice and she now has a steady stream of new clients based upon this one charitable effort.

**Action Plan: Start simple. Charity, supported with heart, can help build your community business.**

## IDEA 2

### ***Be pro-active to find new customers***

The Dallas-based restaurant chain Canyon Café combs the local papers looking for announcements of people recently promoted. The restaurant then mails a personalized letter along with a gift certificate, congratulating the individual and inviting that person to celebrate the promotion and dine for free at the Canyon Café. A rather simple, but effective idea, more so when the promoted person brings along a slew of friends and office colleagues.

Fact is, people love being acknowledged, especially for an accomplishment or graduation. Or for a business account win. What can you do to actively recruit new customers? Are you doing all you can to woo prospects and begin a relationship with them?

**Action Plan: Be pro-active in obtaining new customers and publicity. Use announcements in your papers and trade journals to obtain names. Double-check to ensure you correctly spell the person's name. Very important.**

## IDEA 3

### ***Even the (seemingly) insignificant can impress the masses and the media***

To encourage a new, younger audience to sample their products, Proctor and Gamble (P&G) created Potty Palooza, a portable restroom that is shunted off to various outdoor concerts and festivals. Unlike the typical portable potty, the P&G version is immaculate and comes equipped with running water, wallpaper, hardwood floors and of course, Charmin™ ultra white toilet paper, Safeguard™ soap and Bounty™ paper towels.

To get media coverage, concert-style T-shirts with the message "Potty-Palooza...it's Loo-la-la" were sent to the local media in advance of each appearance. In addition, the company emailed presses releases to the local media two days before each festival or fair.

The hoopla worked. Stories ran in TV and print in all local market stops. Three national news stories covered the "event." More important, during the time period, sales increased by 14 percent among consumers who used the facilities. Proof: even something insignificant as toilet paper can be newsworthy, if promoted with panache.

**Action Plan: Check out a calendar of local crowd-gathering events for an opportunity to place your product or demonstrate your service. Speak to the event planner with your idea. Be inventive. Send out a T-shirt or promotional item.**

**IDEA 4*****Start a viral survey to quickly build traffic to your website or store***

Mary Goulet and Heather Reider are two long-time friends who had the notion to start a website to bring women together to share ideas on pursuing their entrepreneurial passions without sacrificing family life.

To kick-start their idea, Mary and Heather started a blog site: [www.Momstownblog.com](http://www.Momstownblog.com). To ramp up attention, they asked their small database of friends to vote on: *What's the Best Mom's Site and Why?* The contest survey quickly caught on as women sent emails to friends asking them to support their favourite "Mom's Site." Remarkably, the survey received more than 100,000 votes, and Heather and Mary had as many new email addresses added to their database. All with seven days.

Today the site is successful and self-supporting and the two friends host "The Mary and Heather Show", an Internet radio show.

***Action Plan: When marketing to women, especially to mothers, try a viral email survey or contest to quickly and effectively build your database.***

**IDEA 5*****Ask your employees for ideas to improve business and generate publicity***

If your employees are happy, odds are your customers will be happy too. But what's the best way to ensure your employees remain happy and loyal and give you their best efforts? Give them a bonus? Ask them to attend seminars?

Here's a simple suggestion: ask them for their ideas.

Donna Dooher and Kevin Gallagher are successful owners of the Mildred Pierce restaurant in Toronto. The duo found an unorthodox way of increasing productivity and loyalty: they encouraged their employees to visit a competitor's restaurant. Donna and Kevin would give each employee \$50 to dine at a restaurant with a menu similar to Mildred Pierce. In return, the employees return with a short written report, explaining what they observed and learned.

At monthly staff meetings the employees would share their experiences at the other restaurants with the rest of the Mildred Pierce staff. These presentations accomplished three goals:

1. If an employee noticed better service at a competitor's restaurant, that improvement was introduced to Mildred Pierce as a new best practice
2. By sharing their observed goof-ups from other restaurants, Mildred Pierce employees learned valuable lessons on what not-to-do
3. The simple exercise bonded the entire restaurant staff because people appreciate when their suggestions are acknowledged

***Action plan: Involve your employees by asking them for their advice and recommendations, from how to improve products and services to how to combat competitive threats. Strive for happy and proud employees and you'll be rewarded again and again.***

**IDEA 6*****To attract attention, make your promotional package newsworthy. And alive, if possible***

Ocean Nutrition Canada (ONC) is in the business of researching, manufacturing and marketing Omega-3 based ingredients obtained from seafood products, all created to improve human health. The Dartmouth nutri-pharmaceutical company uses crushed lobster shells as an ingredient for some of its vitamin supplements.

To introduce its product line-up to generic supplement producers, the young company needed to make a strong first impression—so they sent via Fed-Ex two live lobsters to each of their 10 highly targeted prospects. To accompany the lobsters the company added a waterproof sales piece that invited recipients to “Feel free to take our sales reps home for Thanksgiving Dinner.” The mailer was followed up by a phone call three days later.

**Result:** a 90 per cent response rate and more than \$850,000 worth of new business. And certainly one of the most talked about mailers, even for those who didn’t like lobster.

**Action plan:** *When you market your product or services to a well-defined particular target, think outside the box. Or if you use a box, make it waterproof, and fill it with an incredible edible offer. Get people talking and you’ll get results.*

**IDEA 7*****Try a different mailer size to see if you get better response rates***

Dr. Greg Nielsen is a well-known chiropractor that has mastered the art of innovative promotions. One tactic he offers to his patients is 10 percent off on their next visit with the matching of the discount going to charity. He usually sends these postcards out to his database by mail and does very well with the response rates.

Recently he decided to alter the postcard in a unique way. He did not change the copy, color and visuals on the card; he simply tripled the postcard size. Interestingly enough, he tripled his redemption rates. Sometimes, size matters.

**Action Plan:** *To improve success rates, always test your mailings and copy. This includes email subject lines. Check only one component at a time to see what works best. For other promotional ideas for professionals, check out Dr. Nielsen’s site at [www.docnielsenstuff.com](http://www.docnielsenstuff.com)*

**IDEA 8*****Use random acts of kindness to attract publicity***

Guerrilla marketing involves promotional tactics that get “street” publicity in unexpected and often unusual ways. We love the following example gleaned from the kind-hearted tactics of a well-known department store.

During the holiday season Marshall Fields sends “Jingle Elves” onto the streets of Chicago to perform random acts of kindness. These ambassadors of goodwill offer hot chocolate along Michigan Avenue, pay bus and subways fares for commuters, hand out lip balm and hand lotion to pedestrians and read stories at local libraries.

What a great idea. These kind gestures are far more persuasive than any ads that proclaim, “we care about our customers.” Actions speak louder than words. The elves serve as reminder that holiday spirit is about giving, not receiving. The goodwill from the media coverage, word-of-mouth recommendations and blogger chat is phenomenal. Good for you Marshall Fields, every retailer should follow your lead.

**Action Plan: Think about a guerrilla-marketing tactic for your product or business. High school and college students from a drama class make excellent recruits to help deliver your activity to the streets. What can you do in a tangible way for your community at important event times of year?**

## In conclusion:

There’s no secret formula to generating publicity in the media. For the most part, it’s an easy two-step process. First, create a noteworthy event or activity, and second, notify the media of your activity or accomplishment.

The real secret is to find those activities that not only draw public attention, but activities that draw the attention of those in the print, broadcast and Internet media. Hopefully these ideas will spark an idea you can adapt for your business.

Good luck building your business, and as always, if you know of someone who would benefit from this tip sheet, please pass it along to them, but then ask them to sign up for free subscription themselves. You can do that here.

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### **COOKING TIP: Ahh, now that’s the rub...**

A rub made with pink and black peppercorns gives a zesty crust to classic prime rib, or any beef cut for that matter. Pink peppercorns are not true peppercorns but berries from the Baies rose plant grown in Madagascar. Look for the freeze-dried type in gourmet stores or well-stocked grocery or bulk-food stores.

To prevent the peppercorns from springing away from you, lay them on a hard surface and cover with wax paper or plastic wrap. Then use a kitchen mallet or the flat side of a large knife to gently crush the covered peppercorns.