



Marketing Your Training Business

For many professional trainers the amount of time spent on marketing for future growth of their personal skills, their training programmes and their training businesses is left to be done in time squeezed between seminar presentations, or in rushed deadline hassle advertising copy, and in total flouting of the rule 'working on your business' instead of 'working in your business'.

Consider if you will some of these tools which can assist you in the marketing of your training business.

The first area you need to consider is making sure that participants who have seen you present, listened to your training, and learnt from the skills are fully equipped to be able to make recommendations to their management, to their business associates and for their own businesses.

This can be achieved by having a banner display, a poster, or an exhibition-type banner that sits in the training room with you, has details about your key programs and also contact details; as part of a visual stimulation.

The work books should each contain a list of what people can find on your website and also details of your programmes and any particular additional products that people can buy. A very good idea for this is to print it on a light card and make this the last card in your workbook.

Presentation of certificates with your brand name and your website help to create a lasting impression. Action involvement devices such as return postcards, task lists and interactive exercises all serve to market your brand and your availability as part of a follow-up.

Free interactive involvement such as free advice by email or follow-up support further markets your commitment to ensuring that people are able to participate fully and benefit from the learning.

A thank you email after your presentation to the participants based on business card collection or registration email details helps to personalise and also ensure that participants remember your email contact.

The obvious things like the business card given out at the door will also assist in promoting your brand name, providing that your business card has more than just your name and phone number. On the business card there needs to be a photograph of you (as people will remember the personality), a list of what you'll find on the website and perhaps even some promotion details about some of the programmes or skill areas that you work in.

You can measure the effectiveness of your marketing at your seminars by the new business that is generated from the existing seminars from people asking you to do personalised in-house, or more seminar programmes, and as you become more skilled you can set yourself a higher target with a number of participants that you want to have giving you a referral.

External marketing is one of the biggest budget beaters if it is not done right, and to most trainers it is quite scary; how do you choose which media is going to work for you, be liked by your potential clients, and be cost efficient?

There are two particular media communications that stand out for cost efficiency.

The first is contributing articles to media publications about your viewpoints and particular areas of strength, with a referral back to your website. This has the opportunity of letting people know what your views are. It also gives people the opportunity to feel as if they know you, and having read something about you because it has been written down, it is believable. They can then be encouraged to make contact to have you do some in-company or public seminar work.

A very good website to use is www.mediapeople.co.nz for media contacts about publications to submit articles to. Keep on submitting the articles, whether they're accepted or not; sooner or later they will get accepted, and you get some brand building publicity for your training seminar personal brand.

Speaking at conferences, workshops and public seminars is another very effective way of letting people see your style, get a tiny peek at your training skills, but most of all build an affinity with your personality. These conferences (some of which are paid, some of which are non-paid) are an ideal way to profile yourself within targeted industries as well as build that very valuable testimonial for the website or your testimonial book. Advertising in general media such as newspapers, radio and general magazines is basically a waste of time, the audience is too wide and it's too hard to measure and can very quickly eat up your budget with very little resource result.

Advertising in specialist trade publications, providing they are your target market; using a mixture of editorial, advertorial and advertisements that promote what existing participants have said, eg success comments inviting people to check out your programmes on your website, will prove effective as long as you are consistently in the media or the publication. Don't just advertise once and hope you are going to get a response. You need to have advertised a minimum of 3 times in the particular publication to make sure that you've been noticed and to prove to readers that you're serious in the long term. So it means that the media publication that you choose has to be carefully chosen for affordability.

There are over 500 different magazines available in New Zealand for the female audience and over 120 for the male audience, all broken down in industry by segment.

Often overlooked, but not to be forgotten, are the online publications such as xtramsn and other such business newsletters that you can contribute articles to. Of course you can also if you wish, participate in their click-through advertising programmes, although again these are very hard to measure.

Radio as a media at the moment is very hard to use, it is wildly scattered and very hard to measure. Most packages require you to be on about 5 or 6 stations to actually become noticed and generally it doesn't work for promoting a training business. I guess there will be some trainers reading this article that have had some success promoting on their local community radio station. Good luck, I hope it has worked for you, but as a general comment radio doesn't work for training seminar businesses.

An interesting development is the promotion in television on business programmes, this is something I have had some personal success with, promoting in the ASB Business early morning 6:30-7:00am television programme; both on a local and regional basis with a brand building 15 second television advertisement and also a product sales advertisement. The benefit of this media is because we are in the speaking/training skills presentation area, people can see you, they can hear you, and then if you drive them to your website they can check it out. It is not an expensive media after production costs have been provided for.

Another area of external marketing is to become a board member of an institute or membership association that it is targeted to the industry that you wish to work in. This lifts your profile amongst the movers and shakers of the industry and can provide you with opportunities for networking and business.

Now when it comes down to time to actually plan this marketing, you need to look at your training seminars in 12-week action plans to generate leads, prospects and revenue over the next 12 weeks. A copy of a 12-week, 90-day action planner is available free on my website www.geewiz.co.nz as a format that you can use to plan an activity every week to be promoting your training business.

Remember that in New Zealand the prime training seminar workshops conference season is essentially March to October, so you need to be having a campaign during the March to October seminar season to make sure that you are getting leads for the coming year, you are getting leads for immediate action, and you are building your profile so that people are going to invite you to address their conference or present seminar workshops. During the off-season you need to be targeting for face-to-face visits to discuss training and budget needs.

In addition there are overseas opportunities which are most cost-efficiently targeted by direct mail, direct emails, and the same activities for speaking at conferences internationally. This can extend your training business into the October/November/December/January period.

By giving yourself 4 12-week action plans during the year you are more likely to achieve results because it's short-term, and you're going to be focused on actions that you can take in the next few weeks.

Make sure you include in those actions the writing of an e-newsletter that goes to everybody on your database on a reasonably regular basis, offering 80% free content, tips on how you can build your business using your ideas and skills, and 20% promotion of your next seminars or programmes or availability.

Marketing your training business is about the promotion of yourself, your personality, what others have said about you and how well you have delivered to the participants. It is not something to be frightened of; it's a necessary part of business. Go out there and communicate your skills and your training business, and make a difference.

This article contributed by Richard P Gee, marketing consultant, interactive author of 'Practical Marketing in New Zealand', training presenter and conference speaker. More details can be found on the website www.geewiz.co.nz.