

## **Marketing with Newsletters**

Staying in contact with customers and prospects helps generate new business and new customers. Many organizations, from office supply companies to book stores to banks use newsletters as a reason and a means to communicate with these groups. If you watch your mailbox, you will probably find several newsletters from your vendors and those that want to be your vendors. Here are some ideas to help you evaluate whether a newsletter should be part of your marketing strategy.

### **Timeliness and frequency**

A newsletter keeps your name in front of potential buyers. Most buy decisions are made on the customer's timetable and if your company can have a presence at that buying instant you are more likely to be considered. In addition, a consistent stream of newsletters helps to build awareness with potential buyers so they think of your company when they are ready to make a buy decision.

### **Content**

The newsletter's content should be relevant to the reader. A newsletter filled with product promotion messages is perceived as just more advertising. A newsletter that includes information that can help the reader accomplish his/her goals is perceived as useful education. It often seems that the most effective newsletters are a combination of the sender's marketing messages, ideas for the reader and general comments. An example would be a newsletter from a local bookstore telling of a book signing, reviews of a couple of books and observations on the use of electronic books.

### **Form**

Newsletters do not have to be glossy, four color, eight page documents. They should look neat, but the content should be the focus. Many software programs have templates that can make the preparation easy. You may find that a single two-sided page can be effective. If you need a more polished newsletter, advertising agencies or free-lance designers can be used.

### **Distribution**

Often the hardest and most feared task is getting the newsletter sent to the right people. Certainly you should include your existing customers and any prospects you have. You may want to consider buying a mailing list to supplement your contacts. You can check the Yellow Pages under "List Brokers" and select based on location or other criteria the broker can help you with. Another source of names can be trade association lists if you primarily sell to businesses in a certain industry. If you have a retail business, you may want copies available for shoppers to take.

If you end up with a large list, you may want to use a mailing service and have the newsletter sent using bulk rate postage. Usually you need over 300 to qualify for the

lower rates and many mailing services want at least 1000. You can probably save about 15 cents on postage with bulk postage rates. You should compare your postage savings with the cost of the mailing service.

### **Summary**

A newsletter marketing effort takes time and work. The effectiveness of this type of marketing tends to improve the more you do. You may want to consider committing to four quarterly mailings to give it time to work.

If a newsletter marketing program seems like a good idea, start saving newsletters you get from others. You should be able to see what makes sense and what does not.