

Major Market Ideas

By Pat McKay

The downturn in the economy means marketing is more important than ever, and that there's less money to spend on it. But marketing is a key component in running a successful business. Here are some tips on how to keep your marketing efforts active even when the recession is hurting business:

- **Hold on to existing customers.** Keeping customers is always less costly than finding new ones, so stay in touch with current clients. Offer them suggestions on low-cost embroidered items that can help them sustain their marketing efforts.
- **Focus your efforts.** Even if all your existing customers stay with you, you're going to need to find new ones too. But spend your marketing dollars carefully. Your message doesn't need to reach the whole world – just the people most likely to buy from your business. Ask yourself what your current clients have in common and take your message to prospects that fit the same mold.
- **Network and encourage referrals.** Put your business connections and existing clients to work for your business. Attend chamber of commerce events and other networking opportunities. Ask your customers if they know of anyone else who might like your work – and offer those existing customers a gift for making a referral.
- **Be your own PR agent.** Press coverage is great publicity, so work to get your name in the local newspaper. Your local library should have books on how to write a press release. Write several and send one out every month. Keep in mind that the newspaper is looking for news – focus on newsworthy events and if possible, send a digital photo too.
- **Make a plan and follow it.** Be honest – we all have good intentions, but life can get in the way. The best way to keep your marketing active in a downturn is to create a plan that commits you to specific actions every month – attending a networking event, sending a press release and bringing a small gift to a client are all good ideas.

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