

PROMOTIONS THAT WORK

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Step One – Develop a Budget

- Plan to devote a certain percentage of annual sales to marketing.
- This percentage will vary depending on the type of business, the competition, whether your customers are local or regional, etc.
- Research trade publications and ask others in the field for ideas.
- Superior Gardens devotes 3-5% to marketing.
- Tally total marketing spending of past years for a comparison.
- Remember that investing in good marketing is just as important as investing in good products or good staff.

Step Two – Map Out the Plan

- Looking at the entire year, carve out “seasons” based on your product, trends, holidays, etc.
- Develop your plan based on these seasons.
- Start small, maybe one event or promotion per season.

Example: Superior does winter/early spring/spring/Mother’s Day/summer/fall. All focus on different products and different stages of the garden.

Step Three – Create a Monthly or Weekly Ad Planner

- Plan the entire year.
- Determine message, medium, customers, deadlines (ie, printer or vendors) and possible partnerships with other businesses.
- Add as much detail as possible so planning during the season is minimal.
- Make it special, unique to your business. (CCA has occasional events but they are no substitute for regular promotions designed specifically for your business and your customers.)

Example:

APRIL	PROMOTION	TRIB / RADIO / EMAIL	
Week 14	Easter Lilies	x	x
Week 15	Organic Gardening Class		x
Week 16	Earth Day		x (joint for 15 & 16)
Week 17	Ladies’ Night Out		x
Week 18	Herbs Class		x

Step Four – Ricochet Marketing

- Use momentum from one event to promote the next.
- Helps you stretch ad money by taking advantage of free, in store marketing.
- Keep your staff and customers wanting more. If the staff is excited, it will rub off on the customers.

- Have regular staff training to ensure that everyone is aware of upcoming events and has specific actions to take or things to say to each customer. (Training sessions can also be used to educate staff on product—have them taste new dishes, learn more about the craftsperson who created your latest products, etc.)
- Encourage window shopping at events and track sales the following week to determine success.

Step Five – Determine Fixed and Flexible Costs

- Yearly plan costs should come in at pre-determined % of sales.
- Determine which costs are fixed (ie, monthly fees for website or email newsletter) and which are flexible (ie, radio, print, etc.) This will help you keep within your budget.
- Not every promotion will require traditional (and more expensive) advertising. A good email list of loyal customers can be helpful if you have a limited budget. The key is to constantly remind your customers that you are there and that you have new stock or services.

Step Six – Create a Desire to Return

- It's easier to get regular customers to buy more than to find new customers.
- It takes 6-8 “touches” to pull a new customer into a business. Loyal customers don't need this much contact because they are aware of what you provide. However, they need to be enticed to return.
- Superior found that by increasing the budget directed at current customers they increased each sale between \$10 and \$15.
- Develop promotions that encourage return trips. Superior doesn't have traditional sales because they found it discouraged day-to-day traffic. Instead, they focus on coupons or “Greenbucks” for customers.

Example:

Customers earn \$1 Greenbuck for every \$10 spent throughout the year. Greenbucks can be redeemed for up to 50% off an entire purchase during their annual “Greenbucks Festival” in September. In order to participate, Superior must have your name and contact info—including email.

Example:

Superior sells large pots and encourages customers to have the pot replanted each season by offering a coupon at the initial planting. This encourages repeat visits.

Step Seven – Set Aside Time to Plan

- Business owners are often so busy working with customers, they don't find time for planning. This means each event, ad buy or newsletter takes twice as much time.
- Set aside time in your slow season to map out the year.
- Do not make ad decisions based on which ad rep comes to visit you. Your marketing plan should fit your needs, not theirs.
- A plan is simply the first step—remember to plan, implement, measure and adjust. (Use in store or email surveys for customers, have your staff ask customers how they heard of you, track sales during and immediately after a promotion or ad and compare from year to year, etc.)

Remember, visit the Superior Garden Center website, www.superiorgardencenter.com, for more details about their events and promotions.