

10 tips

for successful marketing for SME brokers

Here are 10 practical tips that will improve a broker's approach to marketing and help drive increased profit.

By Nick Hill, Director, Hillster Marketing

1 Have a plan – your marketing plan should build from an overall business plan. The more detailed the better, but simply stating what the key goals for the business are, and the areas you want to focus on, will be a big help.

2 Focus on things that make money – just because something generates revenue does not mean it is profitable. Work out what products and activities generate the most profit and focus more resources on them. For example, hotel insurance may be your biggest seller but the time it takes to service the business and the level of commission gained may mean it is not delivering as much profit as other types of business.

3 Review your current activities – many marketing activities just develop over time, meaning that often brokers do not know the extent of their advertising, events, sponsorships and local mailings, let alone whether they benefit the business or not.

4 Look professional – modern software means brokers have no excuse for poorly formatted documents, using clip art and having an outdated website. If your materials do not look professional, you can be sure your competitors are benefiting from it.

5 Get more from everything you do – the old adage about ‘the more you put in, the

more you get out’ really does pay dividends. Just because you sponsor the local footy team doesn’t mean business will roll in the door. But, if you get involved, use the club’s networks and keep working on new angles, you’ll get a better return, no matter how long you have been doing it. For example, simple changes to the OAMPS website helped boost web enquiries by 40 per cent. The key is to know which small, but potentially impactful, changes to make.

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6 Use what you have got – do not even think about randomly scrambling for the Yellow Pages to get new clients before you have put a structured plan in place to keep and grow existing clients, win back previous clients and obtain referrals from your existing network. For example, a lost client’s details should be enough to be able to offer them a quote at next renewal without much extra work. Many underwriters and other suppliers also have resources that can help your marketing activities.

7 Integrate your activities – a direct marketing campaign aimed at your most profitable segment, alongside local advertising and some media coverage, will be far more successful than doing each individual activity at separate times and in different places.

8 Measure it – if you don't measure what you do, you will have no idea how successful it is. Ideally, set some targets and measure success against them. You are then in a much stronger position to make decisions on what to do next year. I have yet to meet a broker who can honestly say they know exactly what kind of business they have written from their Yellow Pages adverts.

9 Internal communications – your people are your most important asset and the heart and soul of your brand. Even for small businesses, the more you engage and involve people in where you are heading, the better off your business will be. If nothing else, make sure they know what marketing is being done. There is nothing worse than a prospect calling after receiving a mailing and the person answering the phone saying:

“Really, I've never heard of that, I think you have got the wrong company”!

10 Get out there – successful brokerages are based on strong relationships, both with clients and underwriters. Don't fall into the trap of hiding behind the desk and email. Get out of the office and meet people, and if you can't physically meet them, give them a call. Every hour that goes by that you're not doing this, your competitors are.

Taking the time to think about what you are trying to achieve, doing something and then measuring its impact will get your business in much better shape. Marketing unlocks the key to business success. ✓



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CASE STUDY

Objective

Raise the company profile in a large regional town and increase the number of business clients. The idea was to be one of many sponsors of a charity bike race.

Problems

This approach would have meant the company logo was one of many giving very limited awareness, no targeting towards desired business customer base and limited time span of promotion around the event.

Solution

An integrated plan was developed with a clear objective to promote the company to business owners. The company created and sponsored the 'Corporate Challenge' for business entrants and used this, as well as staged events, to promote the company and deliver opportunities for one-to-one contact with the business community. Activities started well before and extended after the race to maximise promotion time.

Results

- Negotiated naming rights for sponsorship of 'Corporate Challenge' and received

name on race jersey for cost of basic sponsoring.

- Created an event in town that made the front page of the newspaper, as well as radio and TV news.
- Enhanced local goodwill by boosting entry to the charity event.
- Strong presence at event itself with involvement from all local and some national employees.
- Post-race opportunities to hand out race certificates to businesses to further connect with potential clients.

Summary

This approach led to a significant increase in local awareness, had a clear focus on the target market, connected with a new prospect base and engaged employees. On its own, adding a logo to a sponsorship board would have delivered none of these results and so would have been time and money wasted.

