



## Highly Effective, Low Cost Marketing Plan

**THIS IS A  
FREE BONUS FOR**



**By Debbie Allen**

International Business Speaker & Best Selling Author

[www.SalesandMarketingSuccess.com](http://www.SalesandMarketingSuccess.com)

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# Highly Effective, Low Cost Marketing That Really Works

Every business that wants to succeed faces an important question.

*What can I do to be heard amongst the clamor of my competition?*

I've discovered the solutions are simple changes that any business owner or employee can implement very quickly, and often cheaply or for free. There is never a good excuse to NOT market your business.

You simply CAN NOT – NOT MARKET!

So what if you don't have a large marketing budget. No excuses! Some of the best and innovative marketing ideas that I've used cost me next to nothing to implement. As an entrepreneur all of my adult life I've done many start up companies.

Most had little money in the marketing budget – therefore I learned to get creative and look at other sources to market my businesses. I still use most of the ideas shared here even with a large marketing budget.

Why? Because they work!

## 5 Simple, Low-Cost, No-Cost Marketing Strategies

### 1. Step Out of Your Comfort Zone & Network More Often

Develop your networking skills by stepping out of your comfort zone and by attending events where you don't know a soul.

**Get Out** – By getting out of your place of business and working ON your business instead of just IN your business ... you'll improve your networking skills, showcase your expertise, and build new business relationships at the same time.

**Be a Joiner** – Join one or two new networking organizations and get out of your business to meet new prospective customers in person on a regular basis. Focus on groups that have members in your core target market.

**Get Involved** –Volunteer, get involved and serve on committees and association boards. Don't just attend the meeting and leave—get involved. This will get you more recognition in the group and it will be a great opportunity for you to show your expertise and build on your leadership skills at the same time.

People often get discouraged with networking because they don't see results right away. They forget that networking takes time, focus, and effort. You need to stay out there and in touch, and you need to use the services of other people that you meet. When you show a sincere interest in and support for their business, it will turn around in business for you.

The first step in reaping big rewards with your networking is to enjoy the process of meeting new people and taking the time to get to know them first.

*Action Plan:*

Work on stretching yourself by attending more networking meetings where you can get to know new people in your community. Commit to attending at least three meetings per month outside of your business and start making new business connections.

Write out your 15-30 second commercial and define what you do in benefits. Then, practice your commercial until you have it down cold. For example, I don't tell people that I am a professional speaker and author. I tell them, "I help businesses to Out-Market, Out-Sell and Out-Profit the competition. I do that through professional speaking and writing." Get the idea?

## **2. Build Strongly Connected Business Alliances**

*Network Strategically and Build Alliances.* Build a strong network that supports your business success. This will develop magnified marketing and tons of referrals from your best customers.

*Promote and Market Your Alliances.* Become the walking/talking Rolodex™ of your community by continually supporting and referring other businesses. The next step is stay in contact with them from time to time for years to come. Don't ever lose the contact! Keep them in mind when referring business. Talk about them and their business in the community. Support them in any way that you can.

*Seek Out Joint Venture Opportunities with your Alliances.* Ask, “How can I help you become more successful and how can we work together to achieve our goals?” You’ll note that people pay attention when you ask this question and focus on them first before promoting YOU and what you do. Get to know others first when building an alliance and if they are open to forming an alliance begin to brainstorm how best to promote one another.

*Send Business to Your Competition.* Yes, your competition. You cannot be all things to all people, so know your expertise and pass the rest on to your competitors. Why? Because ... they have the same target market. Friendly and fair competitors will go out of their way to return the favor.

*Never Throw Business Away!* If you are not the person for the job, find someone else who is. Your customer will appreciate your help. And, by sending business to others, you get your name out in front of the referral, who will often look for ways to return the favor.

Why This Works:

- You’re a hero to your customer by helping them and being open to competitors.
- Servicing your customers should be the first and foremost on your list of priorities.
- Business comes back to you many times over when using this method effectively.
- People like to do business with people that they like, and they like people that treat them fair, honesty and who truly care about making personal connections and offering supportive service. That’s just good business!

*Action Plan:*

Discover three businesses you can align yourself with to share co-promotion. Name three people you will contact this week that may be interested in forming a strong business alliance.

### **3. Promote Your Business with Public Speaking**

Being asked to speak about your expertise at a chamber of commerce or other business-networking meeting is a great way to promote what you do.

Public speaking is a powerful marketing tool that costs nothing but your time—especially if you are featured as the expert in your topic.

Your company's success depends upon communication. You face endless exchange of ideas, messages, and information as you and your employees deal with one another and with customers day after day. How well you communicate can determine whether your company quickly grows into an industry leader or joins thousands of other businesses mired in mediocrity.

Toastmasters networking clubs offer you the tools that will enable you to become an effective communicator and leader all at a very low cost. Toastmasters produces results.

Toastmasters International is a non-profit organization that was established 1924 to help people speak more effectively. Now people from around the world more than three million men and women of all ages and occupations have benefited from joining.

You can quickly improve your public speaking and networking skills by joining a Toastmasters networking club near you too. Toastmasters is one of the best ways to improve your communication skills fast. Lose your fears of public speaking and learn skills that will help you be more successful in and market your business at no cost to you.

#### **How Toastmasters works**

At Toastmasters, members learn by speaking to groups and working with others in a supportive environment. A typical Toastmasters club is made up of 20 to 30 people who meet once a week for about an hour.

You'll find all Toastmaster Clubs very welcoming. But if the first club you attend does not feel like the "right fit" or the right group of business people you would like to connect with then attend another club in your area to find the best fit. Then JOIN and keep going.

You'll be amazed how quickly your confidence and speaking skills improve. Have fun and enjoy learning new skills that stretch you outside of your comfort zone and empower your self-confidence. The sooner you get started, the sooner you'll be reaping the benefits that public speaking can offer you in free marketing opportunities.

Find a Toastmasters club(s) near you by visiting [www.Toastmasters.org](http://www.Toastmasters.org).

#### **4. Ask For Referrals and Testimonials**

There are *two easy steps* to creating glowing testimonials.

*The first is to simply be aware.*

We all love compliments. Next time you receive one don't just say thank you. Look the person complimenting you straight in the eye and say, "I appreciate your noticing, that's so nice. A great testimonial like that could be so helpful to my business. Would you mind writing it down for me on your letterhead? Thank you!"

*The second step is to use these testimonials to promote your business and make new prospects into clients.*

Testimonials are one of the easiest, most effective, and lowest cost promotion tools. Although testimonials may be as good as money in the bank, referrals are money in the bank. Once you've honed your referral approach, I can almost guarantee your bank balance will blossom. A referral is simply one happy client or customer telling another. It is word-of-mouth praise.

*Action Plan:*

Ask three clients for testimonials and put them into your marketing.

#### **5. Promote Your Expertise to the Media**

Become the Media's Expert of Choice.

Create a top-25 list of media contacts and stay in touch with them on a regular basis by sending press releases, photos and stories from business promotions, exciting news about your business, etc.

Add a strong "hook" that ties your story into a current news story or add benefits that promote the community in some way.

## **How to Write an Attention-Grabbing Press Release**

Capture the media's attention with a strong headline. Create interest right away and keep them reading. The best way to do this is to create an opening paragraph that contains the most POWERFUL, STARTLING or most INTERESTING information you have to offer.

When you're writing your press release, make sure you answer the questions ...  
What? Why? Who?

## **WHAT?**

A great way to grab the media's interest is to take the position that the reader does not believe what you are saying, and then prove your point with facts and evidence.

## **WHY?**

What you write about must be newsworthy, interesting, and in the interest of the specific media source. Keep in mind that editors and media folks are very busy and know what rules that allow them to create interesting news. When you plan by their accepted rules and appeal to their interests (which is to sell newspapers, magazines, radio or TV airtime), they will often reward you by publishing your information.

## **WHO?**

Contain a quote from a respected expert (YOU). This part of the press release should contain supporting information that explains why the information is relative or important to the reader, listener or viewer of the media. Add your credentials and reasons why you are the expert on the topic. This will establish your authority and will lend you credibility to the article and/or news story.

Use wide margins and double-space the body text. If possible, keep your press release to just one page to make it easy and to read quickly.

At the end of your press release, add your CALL TO ACTION. Here is where you explain what you want the media to do and how they should contact you for additional information and/or approval to print or contact you for an interview.

## **The Amazing Power of FREE**

Do you want something for FREE? Of course you do. We all do.

This is why FREE, is the second most powerful word in advertising and marketing. Using FREE, to promote your products or services will immediately increase your sales. Period!

Using the word FREE in your newsletter, marketing materials, or on your Website will increase your sales almost overnight. First, take a look at what you offer customers now and see what you can give them for FREE. Next, make sure they know about it.

An Example:

On my Website [www.SalesandMarketingSuccess.com](http://www.SalesandMarketingSuccess.com) I offer a FREE business card quiz. Once people take the quiz they learn something and it instantly builds my expertise. When this happens they often contact me to speak at an event or order my products online.

When I kicked off a marketing membership in the past, I offered the subscribers of my newsletter a free test drive audio presentation. Within 30 days the interest to my membership grew and I had created another stream of successful income. This was successful to not only grow a new part of my business it turned out to be a part of my business I could sell off after the membership was built up. Within a few years of building my list, I sold the membership part of my business to another speaker who had a similar target market.

It is easy for business owners to give a way a FREE gift with purchase. Most businesses can purchase gift items at wholesale or create their own special gift certificate. If you are purchasing an item at wholesale you can offer the value at full retail creating a higher perceived value to your customer. A gift certificate can also create a higher perceived value when the marketing message is well crafted.

Along with giving away the FREE gift with purchase, you also want to add the element of SURPRISE. Anything that gets creates an element of surprise is effective – always give your customers more than they expect. This is magical and bonds the customer to your business for life!

People will swarm to your information form and give you their name, address and email when you offer them something for free. You will receive more contacts, make connections and ultimately get more business.

If you have a mailing list with people who have already expressed interest, or customers from the past, send them an announcement by mail or email and tell them what you offer for FREE to get them back in the door.

Don't be cheap – think of this as an effective low cost marketing tool and use the funds from your marketing budget. Giving things away is an inexpensive marketing tool and a great way to advertise plus connect with existing, prospective and long lost customers.

To get those LOST customers back into your door, make them an offer they can't refuse. Anyone can take out an ad, but few companies get the concept of giving things away for FREE.

## **Make Sure You Are Holding the Right Cards**

Your business card may be the next visual evidence about your company. Your card must accurately underline what your business is all about. It will also promote or deflate your professional image and the success of your business in a glance.

Very few business cards or marketing materials had an effective message that described the business clearly. If a prospective customer views the business image as unprofessional or confusing they will simply walk away.

This same image and message must be coherent on all marketing materials ranging from a company's business card, through advertising, packaging and signage to its website.

### **If You Want More Business ... Improve Your Image**

While presenting marketing seminars to thousands of business owners, managers and sales people, I discovered that most had a poorly marketed business image, starting with their business cards.

After leaving my presentations, I would pull out the attendees' business cards to learn more about what their business was all about. What I discovered was shocking! Many presented a poor and unprofessional image of the business at first glance. Very few business cards or marketing materials had an effective message that described the business clearly.

Most lacked a strong visual logo that defined the business and had no branded image or catch phrase that set them apart from their competition. With this newfound discovery, I began to ask members of the audience to stay after my presentation to receive a free business card evaluation. This intrigued attendees, and many waited for up to an hour to have a chance to talk with me personally to get feedback on how to improve.

### **Another Discovery ...**

Many owners and managers are so close to their businesses that they don't see the most obvious mistakes. The reason for this is that they don't look at their business through their customers' eyes. They view it from a very narrow focus, their own eyesight. This can be disastrous for a company's image.

Just as people judge individuals at first glance, so they judge a business image the same way. If a prospective customer views the business image as unprofessional or confusing they will simply walk away.

That prospective customer will be lost to a competitor that does a better job at marketing their company's image, brand and uniqueness. The goal of an

organization should be to create a strong, immediate message that clearly defines their business. The message must connect an emotional bond with their customers both verbally and visually.

This same image and message must be coherent on all marketing materials ranging from a company's business card, through advertising, packaging and signage to its website.

### **20 Ways to Boost Your Business Image**

1. Start to see your business through your customers' eyes.
2. Keep a strong focus on your customer base.
3. Create a unique brand identity, logo and image that are recognizable.
4. Choose your overall image and remain consistent throughout.
5. Create unique marketing that sets you apart from the rest of the world.
6. Develop a strong visual and verbal brand that clearly defines your business.
7. Pay attention to details and present your best image at all times.
8. Improve and update all marketing materials.
9. Create marketing materials that connect with customers emotionally.
10. Use the back of business cards for additional information and/or tips.
11. Ask customers for testimonials and use them in your marketing.
12. Use professional graphics and signage to best represent your image.
13. Update and/or remodel your location or office a minimum every seven years.
14. Hire professionals who can bring out the best in all areas.
15. Be organized so you don't become overwhelmed.
16. Improve your listening and telephone skills.

17. Embrace the latest technology and take it to the next level.
18. Become known as the expert by writing articles for publications.
19. Develop great follow up and follow through in everything you do.
20. Stay ahead of your industry by becoming a life long learner.

### **10 Most Common Business Card Mistakes**

1. Scrambles messages with inconsistent design elements.
2. Does not clearly define your business services and/or products.
3. Does not make you memorable (in a good way).
4. Indicates unflattering things about your business.
5. Does not generate additional business.
6. Creates a cluttered impression.
7. Omits essential information.
8. Looks out of date or information no longer applies.
9. Is hard to read or confusing to the eye.
10. Lacks a point of interest, image or theme.

A great place to start improving your business image is to take a close look at your business card as if you were a prospective customer. Take my business card quiz at [www.SalesandMarketingSuccess.com](http://www.SalesandMarketingSuccess.com) today to see how your card ranks.

## Getting the Most From the Most Underused Marketing Tool ... Your Telephone

### Marketing Opportunities Lost When the Phone Rings

The telephone is another way customers may reach you before they come to your business. A telephone may not seem visual at first, but most people create a visual in their heads about your professionalism and attitude.

Even a brief phone call for directions may make or break a new customer relationship. Telephone and listening skills should be included as a very important part in the training of your employees. So often employees are busy waiting on customers and take a phone call in the middle of a transaction.

This is not only a distraction to the customer they are waiting on, but it comes across to the caller as a negative as well, since the employee might not be "all there."

When the phone rings in your business are your employees prepared to turn the call into a solid marketing opportunity? Or are they rushing through the call, not connecting with the prospecting customers and losing you thousands of dollars in lost revenue?

How many businesses do you call that WOW you on the phone? How many actually take the time to connect with you and use the opportunity to actually market their business more effectively.

This always amazes me because most businesses spend countless dollars on advertising hoping customers will call them, but when they do customers are often put on hold or put off.

### **HOLD Please!**

You know how frustrating it is when you call a business and before you can get a word out you hear, "Can you hold please?"

Most of the time you don't even have time to respond and they already have you on hold. So why did they even bother asking?

You didn't call to be put on hold or transferred three times explaining your question or concern over and over. Then when you finally think you've been

heard you hear, "Sorry you've got the wrong department. I'll need to transfer you. Can you hold please?" ERRRRRR!

### **Voice Mail Hell**

The only thing worse than being put on hold is going thru voice mail hell. Will a REAL LIVE person ever answer the phone?

Often there are so many choices on the voice mail that you forget when you called for and then the message comes on and says "To repeat these messages press ..."

Then you go thru it all over again and finally you reach the right person in the right department and they say "Can you hold please?" ERRRRRR!

Do these companies ever call their own companies to see how their prospective customers are being turned off everyday? I doubt it!

### **Call Your Own Business Challenge**

When discussing lost marketing opportunities in my presentations I ask for volunteers that would allow me to call their businesses in front of the audience.

Some brave business owner always steps up to the challenge. They call their business from their cell phone and hand it to me. I get on the call posing as a prospective customer and at the same time the call is heard by the entire audience on the microphone. Most of the time they are shocked by what their employees have to say.

Example:

The owner of a company who sold sandals wholesale had a warehouse in the city where I was presenting. He made the call and handed me the phone. I explained to the employee that I understood that they were wholesalers, but wondered if they could tell me of a retail store in the area that sold their shoes.

After the employee told me he was not sure, he put me on hold and when he returned he told me no sorry we don't have anyone in town. I said okay well I live in Scottsdale, Arizona, do you know of a store that sells them there? I really want to buy a few pairs because I think they're great. No I don't think we have a store there either. I really don't know what retailers carry our shoes.

The business owner sat there in shock as he heard the conversation. When I hung up he told me how upset that made him because they had a couple of retail stores in the area plus some in my city as well.

Whose fault was it that the marketing and sales opportunity was lost ... the employee or the owner/manager?

Both but if the owner never communicated to the employee just how to handle calls and go thru different scenarios to allow the employee to think on their feet, how would they ever know how to do it much less do it well.

### **Studies Reveal More Lost Opportunities**

Studies consistently show that the telephone remains one of the most underused business tools. Researchers called 5,000 yellow page advertisers to say that they had seen their ad and asked about the price of product or services.

The results revealed endless lost opportunities. More than 78 percent of those phoned didn't bother to ask for the caller's name.

### **Lost Opportunity!**

Over 55 percent took eight rings or more to answer. According to the researchers, many of the people who answered the phone rushed through the call and spoke so rapidly that it was hard to understand them.

### **Lost Opportunity!**

Less than 10 percent answered the phone in a manner that made the caller feel welcome enough to want to do business with them.

### **Lost Opportunity!**

Your telephone could be a powerful marketing tool if you and your employees regard every call as a marketing opportunity. Are you ringing up marketing opportunities or placing them on hold?

### **7 Ways to Create a First Impression Opportunity**

1. *Answer the phone by the second or third ring.* Taking too long to answer crates an impression of disorganization and/or lack of interest. Speak slowly and clearly giving your name, your company's name and a simple, direct offer of assistance such as, "How may I be of assistance to you today?"
2. *Put a smile on your face when you pick up the phone and a smile in your voice before you reply.* Smiling will let the caller know you're a pleasant person to talk to. Although you may not realize it, your smile is conveyed across the phone lines and picked up by the caller loud and clear. To get

into the habit of doing this, place a mirror next to the phone so that you will see your facial expression when you answer. Also remember to smile during the conversation when appropriate.

3. *Sit up straight at the same time.* This will allow you to project a good tone of voice.
4. *Answer your phone with an enthusiastic greeting.* When you are enthusiastic, the caller will catch your enthusiasm and become enthusiastic as well. Since most businesses answer their phones in a boring way, by answering your phone in an enthusiastic manner, you'll make a good impression on your customers and your prospects. A good way to answer your phone is to thank the caller by saying something like ... "Thank you for calling (your business), this is Susan, how may I help you?" or "how may I direct your call"? Avoid asking "May I help you?" This question is not professional. When a customer or prospect calls they assume you can help them automatically.
5. *Place a caller on hold properly.* Sometimes you need to put a caller on hold, such as when you're looking up information or answering a second line. If the caller prefers to be put on hold, make sure you check back with them every minute. And, if it's going to take you longer than the time promised to look up the information, then ask the caller for permission to call them back. Before you put a caller on hold, always ask for permission by saying ... "John may I put you on hold so I can look up the information for you?" Or "John, would you mind holding for a few moments so I can find out who's looking after your account?"
6. *Transfer calls properly.* Before you transfer the caller to someone else, such as a co-worker, tell the caller the reason of the transfer. You can say something like ... "John, I'm going to transfer you to Scott Hall, he's looking after your account." After you put John on hold, you must make sure he gets to talk to Scott in a timely manner. Monitor the line and check back with him after 30 seconds and ask him if he still wants to hold or if he prefers for Scott to call him back. If the caller gets disconnected during the transfer, apologize and give the call special handling.
7. *Take messages properly.* Record the first and last name of the caller, his or her company, the telephone number including the area code, and the date and time of the call. Then write, briefly, what is the nature of the call. Read the message back to the caller to make sure the information is correct. Finally, sign your name to the message and pass it along.

When you follow these tips regularly you're sure to benefit more from the most underused business tool ... your telephone.

## 15 More Ways to Cut Your Marketing Budget

### 1. **Subscribe To All Your Local Newspapers**

Cut out articles featuring people in your community. Laminate the article with your business card attached to the back, and mail it to them. This will really stand out in the mail. A local funeral home did this for me over 20 years ago and I still have the laminated article—fortunately I have not had to use their services yet.

### 2. **Create Your Own Special Event**

Create your own special event based around your expertise. Anyone can create an event and post it for free at [www.Chases.com](http://www.Chases.com) and [www.CelebrateToday.com](http://www.CelebrateToday.com). Once you have created your event promote it to the media and post it on your website.

### 3. **Write a Tip Booklet**

Write a tip booklet that features tips around your business and expertise. To learn more about creating a tip booklet like this one go to [www.TipsBooklets.com](http://www.TipsBooklets.com).

### 4. **Write a Book**

Write a book to promote your expertise. Yes, writing a book is a big project, but with “print on demand” publishing you can now print short run books very affordably in a brief period of time. The title of “author” is impressive and will immediately promote your expertise.

### 5. **Read More Business Books**

Purchase and READ more business books. Don't just collect them, take the time to read them, absorb them and implement innovative ideas.

### 6. **Hire a Marketing Consultant**

Investing just one hour to learn innovative marketing ideas is a great way to move your business ahead and save thousands of \$\$ in marketing mistakes.

- 7. Pursue Free Media Exposure**  
Seek out and act upon any and all the media exposure you can get. Media exposure can give you up to 10 times more publicity than traditional advertising. Plus, it's FREE!
- 8. Create Press Releases**  
Send press releases to the media to promote any news about your business.
- 9. Get on Radio and TV Talk Shows**  
Contact the local radio and TV talk shows and feature your expertise with a hook story.
- 10. Write Articles to Promote Your Expertise**  
Seek out feature stories in all the print media you can find.
- 11. Apply For and Win Awards**  
An award-winning business is impressive and builds your credibility.
- 12. Watch Infomercials**  
You can learn some great sales and marketing strategies from infomercials. The best ones are masters at triggering emotions. Remember, customers buy out of emotion—not logic.
- 13. Promote Value, Not Price**  
Your customers and potential customers are looking for value and they believe you can provide it. Your challenge is to promote and sell the value of your products and services and ask your visitors to take action to receive that value.
- 14. Be Persistent**  
Keep promoting and marketing every day. Persistence is the key. Some things work and some things don't – marketing changes and so do your customers.
- 15. Sell Outcomes**  
Market the outcome of your services and/or products—not the services and/or products themselves.

## About Debbie Allen

Debbie Allen, “The Shameless Success Expert” has been a business owner and “serial” entrepreneur, building and selling numerous companies in diverse industries for over 30 years.

Debbie is the recipient of the *Blue Chip Enterprise Award* sponsored by the US National Chamber of Commerce for overcoming business obstacles and achieving fast business growth.

She is a best-selling author of five books on business success and personal development. Her books include *Confessions of Shameless Self Promoters* and *Skyrocketing Sales*.



Debbie’s sales and marketing expertise has been published in dozens of publications around the globe including: *Entrepreneur*, *Selling Power*, *Sales & Marketing Excellent*, and *Franchising Magazine*. She has also been featured in four motivational movies including *Pass it On*, *Windows on the Secrets of Success*, *The Opus* and *The Compass*.

As an international business speaker, Debbie has presented to thousands of people in numerous countries around the world sharing her innovative business strategies and secrets to success. She has earned the award of CSP, Certified Speaking Professional by the National Speakers Association and International Speakers Federation, an honor earned by less than 10% of professional speakers worldwide. Learn more at [www.DebbieAllen.com](http://www.DebbieAllen.com)

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