

Promotion & Advertising Tips

Here is a basic truth of small business: if people don't know who you are, it doesn't matter how good your product and services are. Baring this in mind it, it is imperative that you think of ways to properly market your business. So let us now consider what is involved with the promotion and advertising of your hot dog cart.

Many feel that advertising and publicity are interchangeable. But this isn't the case. There are definite distinct differences between the two. Advertising directly tells about your business and why people need your product. Publicity isn't as direct. It may just simply get people exposed to your product. Advertising will usually cost you money. Often publicity doesn't have to cost a thing! This can come in the form of goodwill or interpersonal relations with your customers.

To help illustrate the differences let us consider the example: You pay for an advertisement in the local newspaper. That same local newspaper does a feature article on your new business. The paid ad is advertising while the article is promotion. In the following example, the advertising cost money while the promotion was free.

So here are 14 different marketing ideas to help advertise and promote your business. Some of these may have some costs involved. Other would be totally free of charge.

1) Have business cards and flyers made up.

These old stand bys are time tested methods of advertising. Concerning business cards this could include a list of products on the back, and these can be handed out freely.

The flyer should include a nice full color picture of you and your Hot Dog Cart along with your hours of business, location, menu, and cell phone number for phone orders. It would also be helpful to indicate that your cart is licensed and meets all the Health Code requirements. Keeping it to one page and one sided will also make it easy to be posted in a company lunch room. It could also include an introductory coupon as a means to attract new customers.

The flyer can be delivered to all businesses in your local area. Even though this could include mailboxes, to extent possible it is wise to deliver them in person. This will give you an opportunity to introduce yourself to the community. As you do so, make sure you are dress in a professional manner. This will help make a lasting first impression.

2) Focus on proper signage.

It would be good to get a vinyl graphics company to make up some large professional looking graphic signs for your cart. This will help advertise you and your products and attract customers.

Putting up sandwich board signs 200 yards down the road from you could further help draw traffic.

3) Actively get involve in your local community.

Including your hot dog cart at events where the media is present can be a tremendous boost. These can include charity events, parades & cultural festivals, just to name a few. It would be good to have shirts (and other apparel) with your company logo made up, which could be worn for these opportunities. Offering free taste testing at these events can be a way to draw attention to your product.

4) Keep a camera in your cart so you don't miss a photo op if a celebrity just happens to comes by.

These photos could be used for any websites, social networks, blogs that you use to promote yourself. This could also be include in your press kit and submitted to the local media.

5) Develop a website for your hot dog cart.

Use a memorable URL which could be included it in all marketing materials.

3) Make good use of Social Networking

Social Network advertising is becoming a powerful marketing tool. You may choose to set up a Facebook page for your hot dog cart. You can encourage any customers to like your page maybe even offering a discount coupon as an incentive to do so.

You may set up a twitter account where you could keep your followers posted on any new products, specials, or any special events your hot dog cart may be involved in.

4) Start your own blog.

You can write all about your hot dog cart happenings. You can also include any events that you where involved in and will be involved in.

5) Design t-shirts with your logo on it.

These can be provided to any employees to wear, free of charge. You may choose to wear this not only when you are directly working, but at any opportunity when wearing the shirt will generate conversations about your hot dog cart.

6) Send press releases to any local papers and media anytime you are involved in anything newsworthy.

For example you may be getting involved in or sponsoring a charity event. Or you might have some other unique story or angle in connection with your hot dog cart. Any local news coverage can help to promote your business.

7) Create a press kit and keep its contents current.

Include any info that can be useful to present to the press. This can be useful if you are involved in any charity, community, or other events that are receiving coverage from the local media.

8) Get specialty products made such as pens, mouse pads, mugs, calendars, etc... with your store's logo.

Distribute these freely. This will help gain needed exposure.

9) Promote yourself as an expert by writing articles or tips on Hot Dog Cart or small business related topics.

Submit these articles to your local paper, publications or websites. By mentioning that your expertise is a direct result of operating your hot dog cart, this will help gain more exposure.

10) Advertise your hot dog cart in creative locations such as park benches, buses, and popular local Web sites.

11) Pick the slowest day of the week to hold a one-day sale.

It could possibly be a buy one hot dog, get one free. Or for additional positive public relations you could have a food drive, where if the customer brings in a non-perishable food item, they can get a free hot dog.

12) Volunteer or give a speech for a career day at a high school.

This could also make the students (and possibly their parents) and teachers aware of your location. This can also be a helpful lead in finding employees.

13) Create a loyalty program to reward your existing customers.

This could be a frequent buyer card for your Hot dog cart, or whatever other method you want to use.

14) Provide customer service training to any employees you have.

Remember that your employees are ambassadors for your Cart. If they don't promote your business in a positive light, this could null and void any other advertising and promo efforts that you are taking. The most important advertising and promotion you receive is

word of mouth. If your employees don't present a favourable impression you end up squandering a golden opportunity.

Before you launch a marketing campaign, answer the following questions about your business and your product or service.

- Have you analyzed the market for your product or service? Do you know which features of your product or service will appeal to different market segments?
- In forming your marketing message, have you described how your product or service will benefit your clients?
- Have you prepared a pricing schedule? What kinds of discounts do you offer, and to whom do you offer them?
- Have you prepared a sales forecast?
- What type of media will you use in your marketing campaign?
- What types of newspapers, magazines, and newsletters do your prospects read?
- What TV and radio stations do your prospects watch and listen to?

- Have you planned any sales promotions?
- Have you planned a publicity campaign?
- Do your marketing materials mention any optional accessories or added services that consumers might want to purchase?
- Have you prepared job descriptions for all of the employees needed to carry out your marketing plans?

The following tips will help you to effectively promote your hot dog cart business. This guide can also serve as a jump point to come up with your own marketing ideas. Feel free to have fun and be creative.

