



Business

Spring Cleaning for Your Marketing Materials

By Debbie Manning



This time of year, after being cooped up for several months, I always start to look over my “stuff” and think “what can I pitch so I don't have to look at it anymore?!” We all have a pretty good idea about our filing systems' time limits – how long we should keep receipts, bank statements, and tax information.

But what about marketing tools?

Keep your image, tools and desktop fresh so you don't become clutter on your customers' desks! In a world busy with 'branding,' when do you build on what you have, redo what you did a while ago or throw away what you don't like? Here's our recommendations.

Every Month (Spend less than 15 minutes on each of these projects)

• Stay Cyber Savvy.

There are few things worse than outdated websites. Those who rely on the web use it for up-to-date, easy to access information. **If your website still has your last address, or products or promotions that are no longer valid – get new information to your web designer – ASAP!**

Dated information tells your customers (or potential customers) that you aren't serious about your business and implies that you are unreliable. If website information isn't correct, clients will unconsciously become doubtful of anything you offer – before you even build a relationship.

Not only is website updating an easy fix, but it is also pretty time effective. Check your website frequently to be sure it is not outdated. Have your web designer remove all out-dated products, information and expired calendar events. Go online, review, and make a list to turn over to your designer.

If you check monthly and are in frequent communication with your designer, you'll never need to worry about updates being overwhelming.

While you are at it, consider “googling” your competitors' websites. Make sure you are comparable in pricing, service and benefits. Be sure your website stands out so that **you** would choose you if you were shopping for your business product. Keep yourself knowledgeable about your field by frequently checking how your competition is presenting themselves.

• Take inventory.

Make sure your portfolio has your most recent products/promotions. Then fill your wallet with business cards, and put your cards, tri-fold brochures and one-sheet flyers in the hands of your customers. Take a look at your on-hand marketing materials – then get them in the hands of your customers! When you run out of a material (or if you decide that a tool does not work anymore), then re-think it before you re-stock. But for now, use what you have!



Every 3 months (Spend an hour)

• Reflect

Your materials are well stocked and you're efficiently handing out your marketing tools each month ... but what do you always *wish* you had? What could make things better? Easier? Have you had more than one customer ask for your address or your fax number ... and you had to write it on the back of your business card? Have you been printing poorly designed copies of notices for regular upcoming events? Reflect on these items ... the small details and nuances. Don't make this project too big. At this point you don't need to totally redesign your business card (unless you think it's time). Stay focused and stay fresh. Then take your list of new needs and simple changes to your graphic designer and partner with him or her to produce new postcards or updated flyers and cards to meet your business's on-going needs.

Every 6 months (Take a morning – Limit yourself to 3 hours)

• Think Big

Now you can brainstorm. Keep it manageable though. Get out of your office or business, buy yourself a cup of coffee or tea, and pull out a notebook and pen. Make two lists: 'What's working' and 'What's NOT working.' Consider your logo, marketing pieces, web page, slogan, business cards, advertisements, networking events and anything else that you use to sell your business.

Look at your 'What's NOT' list and jot down reasons for why these things aren't working. Keep it simple now – you'll have it on paper so you can revisit your list later, or share with a friend for new ideas and feedback. For now, put down your gut feelings. Don't

worry about having a plan. Think about what you do and how it's working. Consider the results of your google searches and what your competitors are doing. Think about your logo and how you feel when you share it with a new potential customer. Do you cringe because you think it's outdated – while you are explaining to customers how you are cutting edge in your field? Let your intuition guide you. Think big. Start saving logos and marketing

pieces you like. A few minutes with your graphic designer might prompt some easy new ideas to refresh your business.

Every 12 months (Spend an afternoon – Limit yourself to 3 hours)

• Throw stuff AWAY

Look through your old logos, letterheads, flyers and if you aren't still using it – pitch it! I would recommend keeping a file with one of each item for future reference. These materials will bring to mind where you've been and where you want to go – as well as reminding you what has worked and what hasn't. Jot a note on the saved version to remind yourself

what you would change or do differently. There is nothing worse than reprinting a flyer and making the same mistake – forgetting to put your slogan or using a past employee's picture, etc. So help yourself in the future by taking just a minute now.

Use these tips to help you stay fresh, focused and up-to-date in your business world. Spending a few minutes throughout the year will make your marketing plan come to action. It will make marketing more than just a piece of paper and a lofty goal!

With more than 14 years of experience in graphic and web design, DebManning Design specializes in support services that will make your business excel. Call today to discuss marketing ideas or visit www.debmanning.com to explore services we offer.

Thanks to Lori Grasty, a creative resource in DebManning Design, for enthusiastically developing ideas for this column, and to Anne Schwab for the opportunity to layout DuPage Woman Newspaper™ for past five years. Come visit our NEW website at www.dupagewoman.com!

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