

Make a Visual Statement!

The need for a little theatre in your summer promotional activities...



Last year's summer sale was a great success for many participating businesses. The weather was perfect, our very limited marketing budget for the event was highly targeted, and successful businesses did one more basic thing that set them apart from an average ordinary day: they pulled products out onto the sidewalk and made a strong visual for the passing public. This obvious visual adaptation sent a definite signal to potential customers that "hey, something different is going on here, maybe I should stop..."

It's a PARTY and YOU are invited- So, you are at your house getting ready to host a party for about 200 of your closest friends... All you need to do is slap a couple of posters up on your windows that say "party" and everything will be alright, right? You won't need to move furniture, get food, send invitations, have an outdoor set up, decorate or do anything else differently, would you? If you are having a special event, you need to take special steps to make the event, um... special... Think about your summer event (like Summer Sale) the same way. You need to invite guests (advertise), determine which guests you want to concentrate on (targeted marketing), decorate (make special accommodations that show a definitive change) and take other steps to encourage the consuming public to think "it would be silly NOT to come to that event". Below are some basic pointers...

ADVERTISE!- The point of a sale is to move a large enough volume of merchandise to either justify the discounted price (bulk margins) or simply get rid of slow-movers so you can reinvest the cash into new merchandise. To accomplish either of those goals, you need to advertise... One of the great things about Emporia's media community is that they are adaptive. They know their market, they know what works and they can work with most budgets. As long as you are clear with your goals (target market, sales goals, customer traffic, budget) you should be able to find a suitable media outlet. Use "[words that sell](#)" in your advertising to improve traffic, and remember to express energy and excitement in your ads. Sales are meant to generate impulse buys/traffic, and you can't do that with a dull voice or image.

BULLSEYE!- This sounds simple, but it is often overlooked... Who are your best customers? Why not invite them to the event? Targeted marketing, when blended with traditional advertising and social media is highly effective. Why? Because it creates frequency in different formats, and those different types of customer interaction force a memory of the event. Postcards, direct e-mails, text messaging to top



customers or good old fashioned phone calls make a big difference. In a modern business, there should be very little "down time" simply because there are so many ways to reach out to your customers... If you want an even bigger impact, consider a very exclusive or limited event just prior to the larger event that you only invite the top 20% of your customers to (and allow them to bring a friend). Creating exclusivity just prior to a larger event creates word of mouth (and aids in the frequency of message mentioned earlier).

Whoa... What's going on there?- Have you ever asked that question as you were driving by a store or walking past a commercial property? Pulling things outside, music, balloons, colorful displays and doing things out of the ordinary create street theatre. The entertainment value is the bait for your customer hook. Balloons, outdoor cooking (when approved by the health department), outdoor eating, music, activities and more lead to heads swiveling and people stopping at your venue, regardless of whether it is retail, service or restaurant. Make sure what you are doing is consistent with the message you are trying to convey to your target market, but flash helps.



Nancy Crawford sets items in front of the Villager.

I've GOT to have THAT!!!- One of the most prevalent and successful strategies for restaurants, retailers and services vying to grab customers during a special event is something called a LEAD strategy. Essentially, the theory of LEAD goes something like this: identify an item with an easily identifiable value (*grocery stores often use milk, toilet paper, diapers and toothpaste*), try to ensure that the purchase of the item will correspond with other purchases (*or you can convince the consumer to upgrade from that purchase to a higher margin model*) and price the individual item at a severely reduced margin (*and advertise the price*) to encourage or "lead" traffic to

your store. Once the consumer is in your store for that particular item, it is important to either sell several other items or place the item in an area where they must walk through your store past complimentary items. Consumers generally know the pricing value of about 5% of your products. If you take one or two of the items in that 5% and hack the pricing during a special event, consumers will assume the pricing is representative of the items around the discounted item. Now, understand that the pricing CANNOT be shown as a percentage off a price. You need to set a new tag at the reduced price level, but this is a theory that works during special events.

Boomerang- Some people hate special events because they don't see their bottom line effectiveness. First, you have to factor the opportunity cost of items that continue to sit on a shelf because you didn't move it during a special event, but more importantly, these events can allow you (when done infrequently) to branch out to a new customer base. If your business has "*the biggest sale of the year*" every other weekend, people will quickly ignore attempts to pull

people in for special events, but occasional special events allow you to collect personal information through drawing slips or surveys that will enhance your ability to contact people through e-mail or direct mail later. Take this opportunity to provide coupons or gift certificates that are good the day after your special for one month to encourage repeat traffic (and the formation of a new shopping pattern).

STRETCH... - One of the ways you can make an event different is to extend your hours. When you include all of the elements listed above, your ability to create "word of mouth" advertising is enhanced. That "word of mouth" can lead to additional customers if you are open. Traditionally, the Summer Sidewalk Sale lasts from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. These times weren't chosen randomly. The 7:00 a.m. start time allows individuals to shop before work, and the 7:00 p.m. end time allows individuals that found out about all of your great specials throughout the day to stop into your store.



Customers stop along the sidewalk to bargain shop.



Promotions aren't something Emporia Main Street does FOR you, it's something we do WITH you. We can get the word out about the overall event, coordinate dates and encourage participation, but the success of coordinated sales really depends on each an every one of you. Your coordinated efforts to make things "special" will also make event successful. This year, go above and beyond with your promotions. Add some "wow" factor to what you are doing. Get excited about your events, and your excitement (and event participation) will become contagious.

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