

State Conference Tidbits That Save You Time, Money and Sanity!!!

Kansas Main Street Quarterly trainings are designed to educate Main Street members and directors. Continuing education is extremely important in any business simply because technology and the market constantly change. If we don't change with the times, we lose market share and fall behind. The following is a quick breakdown of some topics that I thought our local businesses could use to improve their bottom line.



You've heard me harp on design, both interior and exterior...

But, I know that working with design is tough. On the interior, you don't want to have your office or retail space torn up for extended periods, and on the exterior you want a good plan prior to committing to a design. At the Kansas Main Street State Symposium, a presentation was made about a FREE software package that can help with both interior and exterior design. The software is called [SketchUp from Google](#), and it creates a three dimensional representation of a space. So, if you want to move items around an interior for a store revamp, you can use [SketchUp](#) to create virtual displays and then move the displays around a floor plan that is laid out in actual feet and inches. After completing your plan, you can use the camera tool to virtually walk through your plan. So, with your plan, you can make an efficient floor plan change without "moving the couch" ten times. For exterior changes, like signs and awnings, the [SketchUp](#) software is even easier. You can take an actual picture of the exterior of your building, flip it up on its axis and add a virtual awning or sign. It gives you a cheap, easy way to preview design elements prior to committing resources. Need help getting started? Contact Emporia Main Street.

Breaking into the market.

I've often said that if I don't have an answer to one of your questions, I'll find someone who does. Well, national destination business expert Jon Schallert was available for a question and answer session at quarterly training, and I got some answers to some of your more pressing questions. The big question I generally get revolves around "breaking into" a market. When businesses start up or expand, it's sometimes difficult to attract individuals you planned as your "target market". Mr. Schallert's advice: identify the groups that your targeted individuals participate in, find individuals within that group that you can solicit with free or discounted services and, in exchange for your "compensation" gain testimonials from individuals to help break into larger portions of the market. Who are the decision makers that drive your ideal market? How much are each of those customers worth? Sit down, make a plan and get aggressive in grabbing some new advocates for your business. Use those advocates to drive more customers to your door. Need ideas on how to implement the strategy? Contact Emporia Main Street, or go to www.destinationuniversity.com. This site is FREE for Main Street members (we have your access code at the office), and has several thousand dollars worth of information designed to help you succeed in a challenging economy.

Making money on service.

When times get a little tough, some businesses instantly drop prices and cut services in an attempt to increase their market share. That's not always a smart move. When you compete solely on the basis of price, you open yourself up to endless competition by people that can undercut you at any given time. When you compete on the basis of service, not only can you solidify your market share but you can also sell more products, sell more services and create a more consistent cash flow. Case studies for this type of service based marketing are numerous, but I will give a basic example. We can help adapt other examples to your specific business type if you are interested. Example one is a hot tub business in the Seattle area. By tracking customers use of chemicals to clean their hot tubs, the company set up an automated system to send out and invoice customers for chemical on a routine basis. They also included optional programs that utilized their staff to insert chemicals, do

basic maintenance and provide a checkup of the hot tub prior to the expiration of the warranty. Service people were cross trained as sales people, and profits for this company sky rocketed. Premium services reach out and grab your EXISTING customers. These customers help drive your FUTURE customers.

Creating uniqueness. Please finish this sentence: My business is unique because of _____? Now, once you have answered that question, what part of your answer IS NOT easily copied by a competitor? Standing out in a crowd isn't accidental and it isn't easy. Create the worlds largest _____. The only _____ in Kansas. Become the leading expert in _____. Utilize both traditional media and social media to promote your unique market position. Create a show about fashion tips, floral displays, cooking or car maintenance on YouTube. Write an article concerning a common customer question and submit it to local media. Get outside your comfort zone and become the unique business you can be. In exchange, you will draw customers from a larger area, create more inventory turnover, encourage more service purchases and invent a healthier business. You can do this, and Emporia Main Street can help.

The vast majority of our Main Street members are smaller businesses, and their strength lies in their adaptability. Your ideas, creativity and motivation are a tremendous asset IF you can take your plans and make them a reality. Make a short list of some things you would like to do to improve your business, and then get them done! Play to your strengths, and realize that you have an organization in Emporia Main Street willing to help your business succeed.

Back to home page: www.emporiainstreet.com