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Akron man offers owners of small businesses safe, inexpensive way to learn from those with experience

Marketing strategies compiled in book

By Paula Schels
Beacon Journal business writer

Akron business coach Ron Finklestein asked successful business owners around the country to share marketing strategies that they used to grow their companies.

Now he's compiled their tips into a book: *49 Marketing Secrets (That Work) to Grow Sales*.

Marketing is a major challenge for most businesses, Finklestein said, but it doesn't have to be complicated, hard or expensive.

"Smaller business owners don't understand marketing, its importance or who to trust," he said.

"In creating this book I wanted to provide small-business owners with a safe and inexpensive way to learn about marketing from other business owners who have been there, done that," he said.

Noting that the book features a dozen local sources, he added: "I also wanted to help Akron by promoting successful people that few people know about."

The softcover book is available for \$19.95 through Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, the Fairlawn Borders, or Finklestein's own Web site, <http://www.49marketingsecrets.com>.

Finklestein is president of Akris LLC, a business coaching and consulting firm, and has authored other books.

Each contributor to his latest book was selected for the uniqueness of his or her marketing strategy, and the ability to implement that strategy immediately, Finklestein said.

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Local businesses share marketing tips

Several Akron-area business owners contributed tips to the book *49 Marketing Secrets (That Work) to Grow Sales*. Here's a condensed version of some advice:

Network for referrals

Source: Laura Leggett and James Homyak, B-to-B Connect.

Top-producing salespeople rarely call cold because they focus every day on developing relationships that will generate business by referral.

The two cardinal rules of networking: Have the mindset of helping others, and don't try to sell.

At a networking function, look for people who target similar markets. Your first four questions should be: What does your firm do? What do you do for your firm? What is your target market? How long have you been with your firm?

If the person might be a mutually beneficial contact, exchange cards and say, "Maybe we should get together to see how we can help each other develop some business. When would be the best time to call?"

If they're not a good fit, politely excuse yourself.

Host 'Webinars'

Source: Don Philabaum, Internet Association Corp.

hosting online seminars.

You can use them to demonstrate your product and explain to listeners/viewers how they would benefit. Or use your knowledge of the market to reach out to people through educational seminars.

Tips for Webinars:

- Keep your e-mail announcing the Webinar short.
- Focus on sharing knowledge.
- Offer a written report to attendees.
- Bring in industry experts.
- Record the sessions and post online.
- Know your conference software.
- Incorporate survey questions.

Hold a party

Source: Deborah Chaddock Brown, AllWrite Ink.

Plan a one-day event designed to bring curious potential customers in to explore your store.

But pay attention to the details. Have a clear objective, such as a grand opening, a year-end inventory clear-out, or a customer appreciation day.

Select an offer that will appeal to customers and inspire people to come visit you. Get your employees excited, perhaps offering them

bonuses on that day.

Find a way for a couple of your vendors to participate. Have some kind of simple finger food available.

Stay informed

Source: John Blakeney, Idea Firm.

Business owners ignore daily news at their peril when they can become globally savvy in 10 minutes a day.

Call the Wall Street Journal at 800-568-7625 and sign up for a trial subscription. Reading it online is not as effective; your eyes can interpret 10 times more information in print.

Try this strategy for quickly determining whether there is anything relevant to your industry or your life:

Section A: Read *What's News*. On Page 2, scan headlines for an idea of pressing economic issues. On the opinion page, read the first and last paragraph of each editorial.

Section B (Market Place) and Section C (Money & Investing): Skim the headlines while asking yourself whether any of this is relevant to you or your industry. If not, move on. If yes, skim the story, then set it aside for more thorough reading on the weekend.

Be open to change

Source: Randy Geller,