

Is Your Business Going to Close and Die?

I started working for the Chamber in 1998 and during that time I've become pretty good at guessing which new Chamber members are going to "grow and thrive" and who will "close and die." The one thing that the thriving members do that the dying ones don't? They communicate whenever the opportunity presents itself.

It starts when they join the Chamber. I send new members an email welcoming them to the Chamber, letting them know what to expect over the coming months and asking them to review and confirm their information on our website. The vast majority of new businesses don't even reply with a thank you. A lost opportunity to communicate!

Most of our new members join to network with other local business owners and gain exposure for their business. We send requests asking them to supply info for our newsletter and inviting them to attend Business After Hours to promote their business. Yet most of those businesses can't even take a moment to say a "no thanks". We even call and leave messages and still no reply. Another lost opportunity...

Our Chamber publicly recognizes at least 15 local businesses a year through our various awards. In most cases these businesses were nominated by their customers or members of the general public. We have at most one or two businesses a year ask why they are receiving the award

From the President's Desk

Sue Walker



and who nominated them so they can...wait for this...**THANK THEM!** Those that ask have great communication skills!

Now with more businesses jumping on the social networking bandwagon, I see the "close and die" businesses repeating their mistakes on Facebook and Twitter. They don't use Twitter to communicate with customers; rather they just spew information about their business and don't take the time to communicate with their followers by re-tweeting or replying. The worst offenders use programs that automatically post messages on their behalf. They become uninteresting very quickly.

If you want your business to grow, take the time to talk to people. Not just about **your** business, but **their** business. Reply to emails and phone calls. Find opportunities to say thank you. Volunteer in your community. Taking the time to do these three things will go a long way to ensure that your business is among the thriving.

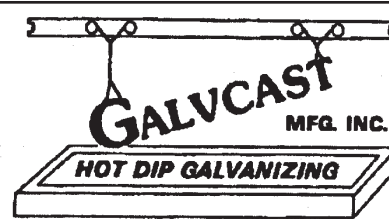
Marketing: Sell your 'pro's – Don't 'con'

By Peter and Tizi
www.studiofourteen.ca

Economic times are tough and most sectors are suffering a crunch. Desperate times sometimes call for desperate measures as businesses scramble to increase market share and profitability. When battling against competitors, some cave to temptation and stretch the truth to get the sale. Remember that while this may seem a viable short term solution, it can wind up having negative consequences and damage your company's reputation. Be creative not deceitful. It is always legitimate to communicate the features and benefits of your company/product that add value to potential clients, and even to take a shorthand approach that may improve the perception potential clients have of your company. (and we all know, it's all about perception) As an example: you regularly import items or parts from offshore destinations, you have established good business connections and reliable trade practices with these foreign resources; your

sources are varied and located in different markets throughout the world; therefore you can honestly say you do business globally (i.e., ABC Company, Global connections, Local service) even though you may not have branches located in these other locations. This can give the impression that your company is larger than it really is – but because you are in fact, able to supply this service and deliver on it reliably, all is well. If instead you made this claim simply hoping for a new customer, without being sure that you can deliver on your claim – well, it can ruin your reputation. Word of mouth is still a powerful way of spreading information – for both good and bad. Know the truth, and know where to draw the line.

A good marketing/design firm will help identify your company's key selling features and maximize the presence/perception your company has in the marketplace thereby increasing your bottom line.



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