

Smart, Cost-Effective Marketing Helps Launch Your New Pet Product/Service

So you've finally done it: your Pet Gizmo works perfectly and you've found a company to produce it for you at a reasonable cost. Now all you need is customers.

How do you get enough people to buy your amazing Pet Gizmo so that you can not only recoup your start-up fees, but also make a profit? In fact, it would be even better if you could interest pet stores in stocking the Gizmo. The solution is cost-effective marketing.

You're just getting started, which means you probably don't have a huge budget for advertising. The good news is that there are several free or inexpensive options available to you.

Press Releases or news releases are a great way to get the word out about your product or service. These are simply short documents written in a specific format but that may also result in further media coverage for your company, product or service. Many people don't realize that it costs nothing to submit press release.

A good source on the details of writing a successful press release is Marcia Yudkin's *6 Steps to Free Publicity*. For a reasonable fee, you can have your release distributed for you. Of course if you're on a tight budget, you can do your own leg-work and access a copy of *Bacon's Newspaper and Magazine Directory* from your public library.

The bottom line is that both direct consumers and pet retailers will read about you and the orders will start to roll in.

Create a Website for your Gizmo. Even if you don't want to market a product or service directly using the Internet, a website can work in your favor. You can buy a domain name and hosting for a very reasonable sum nowadays. Some services also have a create-your-own-website option available. You can provide details about your product and yourself and generally appear organized and efficient. Search engines will index you (or you can submit your information to them) and more people will be able to find out about you.

Pay-Per-Click Advertising is another way to utilize your website to draw additional traffic and interest. If you've ever done a search on Google, you'll probably have seen the column of ads that run down the right-hand column under the heading 'sponsored links.' Often there are a couple of them at the top of the page as well. These are pay-per-click ads.

Essentially you can create an advertisement using step-by-step instructions, and you choose keywords that will pull up that ad when people search for them. You agree to pay a small sum each time someone clicks on your ad (called your 'bid') – the amounts can range from 10 cents to over a dollar depending on how often a keyword is searched. When people click on your ad, they're sent to your website and the cost of the keyword that brought up your ad is added to your monthly bill

You need to keep a watchful eye on your campaign to make sure you're not spending more than your budget allows, but you can program a daily limit to help out with that.

Direct Mail is another way to let people know about your business. You can send out a mailing to an entire geographical area or specifically, for instance, to people who own pets. Sending out postcards, brochures or sales letters to pet retailers is probably the most expensive option mentioned here, however they will certainly get the word out there. And of course you can send out them out in phases as your budget allows. Public libraries are a good source for finding business directories that list pet retailers that you can target.

Take heart: once the word is out there your business will start to grow!

Nicoline Lentze is a copywriter/marketer specializing in the pet industry. She is also the author of the report, "Ready, Set, Market: a checklist for creating a marketing piece for your pet product or service" which is available for free download from her website. To obtain a copy of the report or for more information on her services, visit www.petindustrymarketing.com.