

# Ready, Set, Market: Tips For Successfully Marketing Your Product or Service

By Nicoline Lentze

Every so often when I'm browsing the Internet, or looking through a magazine, I'm amazed at what's missing in the selling process.

For example, if you're selling a supplement, I as a potential customer, want to know, exactly what is it? What form is it in (pill, liquid, powder)? Maybe the website tells me there are 100 capsules in a bottle, but fails to tell me how many I need to take daily. I can't tell from the image of the bottle if the pills are tiny or not. So I'm left wondering does \$39 get me a month's supply, 3 months or what?

Not too long ago I was checking out websites for local printers. One website didn't bother to include their hours, one had a phone number but no address, another had an address but no phone number. There was one which listed their services but didn't post any of their prices. Now I did bother to call that last one, although others might not have... and as it turned out they did have a brochure listing the costs – they just hadn't thought to put it on the Internet.

Hopefully all these omissions seem silly to you. Unfortunately I discover missing elements in the selling process on a regular basis.

Whether you're writing a magazine ad, a direct mail letter, a brochure, postcard ad or a webpage, you want to **provide enough detail** so that your reader is not left with a list of unanswered questions.

To help you out, I've created a **checklist** of components to consider as you create your marketing pieces. These are valid regardless of what type of advertisement you're writing,

**What:** make sure you detail exactly what your product is and what it's for.

If you're providing a service, include details of exactly what you do and if appropriate, include your hours of operation.

**Who:** Are you targeting the general population, seniors, teenagers, women, men, moms, dads, dogs, cats, pets in general... be very clear.

Sometimes the name of a business will make it obvious – for instance, if you run “Happy Paws Dog Walking Service” (random name) it's obvious that you're not targeting cats. But maybe you include an option for cat owners wherein you are willing to check the food and water supply, clean the litter box and spend some time with Fluffy. If so, be sure to specify that.

**Where/How:** If your product is available in select stores, via local distributors, or exclusively through your website, you need to make that clear. Tell your readers where they can buy it. Again, this seems obvious, but I once became quite interested in a magazine ad for a product... but there was no contact info. *Seriously!* – no number to call, no address, no website. I could have but I didn't bother to do an Internet search for them

For service providers, be sure to clearly state where you are, what area you service and how people can contact you. You don't want to spend time on the phone convincing people to come in for a therapy session only to discover they live an hour's drive from your office in downtown Boston... and they have no access to a car nor are they willing to spend the extra time it would take to get to you via public transport.

**Outline Benefits, Not Just Features:** Yes, there's a difference between the two. A feature of your business may be that you see clients evenings and weekends. The benefit would be they won't need to take time off work to get in to see you.

Features of your e-course may be the online videos and the 24-hour live-chat support. The benefit is people can work at their own pace, whenever is convenient for them... and if they have a technical problem or question they can get help immediately, even if it's 3am.

Often the benefits seems obvious to you. My recommendation is that you point it out to the customer anyway. *The more benefits you can outline for them, the better your product or service will seem to your potential clients... and the more likely they'll buy.*

**Add Testimonials:** Of course you want to be sure to tell your customers all about your wonderful product or service. At the same time, having someone else tell them about your greatness is even better.

It's proof-positive that you're as good as you say you are. Even in a small space, you may be able to include a short testimonial in small font that will help your readers decide to purchase the product or contact you.

Include people's full names, city and possibly their occupation or website address. If you can get a photo of them or use an audio or video clip on your website, that's great too.

Remember, people can be skeptical. If you show them real people are saying positive things about your product or service, they're more likely to buy it!

**Be Credible:** People tend to believe that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Make sure that what you've written doesn't sound extreme. If appropriate, back-up your claims with statistics. Again, testimonials can add to your credibility.

In marketing, for instance, if a client is willing to go on record saying "you increased by business by 37%" other potential clients will realize hey, this person knows what s/he is doing!

**Online Marketing: close the sale!** It's amazing, but every so often you'll come across a fairly well written sales letter that successfully convinces you to buy a product, but there's no way to make the purchase. No order button, no link to another page and no information on how to purchase product X.

Your customers shouldn't have to work to make the purchase once they've decided to buy. In most cases, if there's no clear link to an order page, they'll go elsewhere. Tell your readers to take action ("buy now") and make it easy for them to make the purchase.

**And finally...** make sure you proofread what you've written. Have a friend, relative or an outsider look at your material and see if they have any questions that you haven't addressed.

Remember, just because you've put an ad out and not received the response you'd expected, this isn't a sign you should give up on that means of advertising. It may just mean that you need to revise the ad. Part of marketing is testing things out to discover what does and does not work.

Best of luck!

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