

“Ask SCORE” Column  
Green Bay Press Gazette  
Submitted for Publication: Thur., July 1, 2010  
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**Column Title: Marketing Basics**

When teaching business marketing at SCORE seminars, Robert Jahnke, owner of Top Hat Marketing and a SCORE volunteer, likes to ask questions.

“What are your customers’ hot buttons? What are their wants and needs? What can you do to eliminate risk for clients? What systems do you have in place to stay in contact with clients? Do you have a follow up systems? What is the allowable cost to get a client?”

Every question provides information, and Jahnke recommends forming strategies based on this information. Strategies should address every aspect of a business from telephone scripts to defining the sales process. “Decide what your unique selling proposition (USP) is and use it everywhere,” he says.

The USP defines the business and sets it apart. He cited examples such as Walmart’s “Save Money, Live Better” and Subway’s “Eat Fresh. Live Green.” Both are memorable, catchy, and effective. Likewise, every business should develop a USP that tells customers why they should buy from you.

“What are they buying? Customers are buying a result, benefit, advantage, enhancement, enrichment, protection, or entertainment,” Jahnke noted. “Consider what the customer is really buying. When I go to buy a drill, I’m not buying a drill. I’m looking for a hole.”

It is important to understand the motivation behind a purchase, and communicate accordingly. At any time, about 3 to 5% of people are looking for what a business is selling. If your business has established itself as the expert in its field, those customers will come to you. And, even if you don’t sell them the first time around, the statistics are in your favor if you continue to make contact.

Jahnke reports, “The best person to call on is someone who says no the first time. They already know the product. Studies show that on an average, it takes between 7 and 11 calls to get the sale.”

Perseverance is at the heart of every successful marketing program. Beyond that, Jahnke says that an entrepreneur needs to learn innovation, know priorities, test responses, continuously gather information, share referrals, and have a consistent message.

There are only three ways to grow a business: more customers, larger transactions, or more frequent purchases. Each area should have a plan of action in writing. That could include advertising, referrals, special events, sales, information nights, newsletters, cross-

selling, or other strategies. The bottom line is that it costs less to keep existing customers than to find new ones. Jahnke thinks that many businesses make the mistake of spending most of their time focusing on new customers while the loyal customers fall away.

“In your marketing, answer the question that customers are asking,” Jahnke advises. “They want to know, ‘What’s in it for me?’ and you need to keep that in mind first.”

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