

FORWARD STRATEGIES

Make Your Company Stand Out

Affordable promotional strategies can differentiate your company

Consumers are exposed to thousands of marketing messages every day so companies (especially in spaces dominated by commoditized goods) must quickly grab shoppers' attention. Luckily, as noted in the recent book *Think Like a Futurist*, there are clever and cost-effective ways to differentiate your company from competitors. Even simple shifts in packaging or presentation can help you stand out.

Create a Memorable Marketing Message

Setting yourself apart from competitors starts with effective brand positioning to convey your company's value proposition and key points of differentiation. A few simple rules can help you package your solutions including:

- Your value proposition should be summarized in two sentences, and stated in 10 seconds — half as long as an “elevator pitch.”
- Promote one to three unique sales points and communicate them across all creative mediums.
- Charts, infographics, videos and other graphical elements should quickly convey complex concepts.
- Focus on telling a larger story that underscores your company's mission, values, background, personality and shows its positive impact to consumers.

Distance yourself from competitors by positioning. For instance, you might style your company as a leader that:

- Offers more value-minded takes on traditional category offerings.
- Specializes in more creative alternatives to solutions provided by traditional manufacturers.
- Designs its products and services to cater to marginalized audiences or niche segments.
- Places greater focus on sustainability and eco-friendliness.
- Seeks to do social good in the community and make a positive impact.
- Prioritizes more individualized solutions or personalized customer service.

Establishing yourself as unique is largely a matter of resourcefulness, not resources. Successfully setting yourself apart from competitors is primarily a matter of storytelling and presentation. It's all in how you choose to present yourself.

Build Your Advantage

Most marketing boils down to a website landing page and a handful of search engine text. To avoid being overlooked by shoppers, surprise and delight your target audience to jolt them out of passively scrolling past your offerings. Strategies that capture attention include:

- Take an authoritative or contrarian stand on a topic.
- Employ colorful or creative ways to visualize data and concepts.
- Piggyback on rising online trends or timely news topics.
- Use offbeat approaches to get your message across.
- Employ fresh mediums and artistic styles to convey key messages.
- Create outreach campaigns to spotlight your community.
- Offer one-of-a-kind or limited-edition goods.
- Partner with other brands to offer promotional crossovers.

Similarly, employing thematic approaches to marketing campaigns can make a lasting impression. These tactics can help you craft promotional strategies:

- **Urgency:** Emphasize your solutions' ability to help shoppers solve a problem.

- **Accessibility:** Add unique features (for flair or functionality), innovative control methods or capabilities, or fresh ways to interact with your offerings.
- **Performance:** Promote your unique capabilities like processing power, customer service or connectivity.
- **Creativity:** Put fresh spins on familiar concepts, take an original stance on subjects, or rethink outdated paradigms (e.g. offering touchscreen vs. keyboard controls).
- **Collaboration:** Combine forces with like-minded firms to co-design products and services, or deliver crossover promotions that appeal to both audiences.

Stay Competitive

More money, manpower, or cutting-edge solutions are not necessary to impact the marketplace — just take a new approach to how you package and present your outreach efforts. Likewise, no two businesses' strategies for setting themselves apart are the same. To be successful put yourself in your customers' shoes and identify their biggest challenges and then communicate your ability to solve their problems.

It takes time to craft a successful message and determine which promotional strategies most effectively resonate but marketing campaigns must always evolve based on ongoing feedback. The more you simplify your message, set it apart from rivals' positioning, and the faster you can communicate it, the more successful you will be. ■