

The Monthly Resource Guide For Startup Businesses

# NEW BUSINESS

## MINNESOTA

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## Target Marketing

Ready...Aim...Market! What's the best way to reach your target audience? With marketing focused on the bullseye. To help you zero in on sales growth, you need experienced marketing pros such as **Jeremy Rock**, MobileReach (Mobile Marketing); **Mike Bann**, Bann Business Solutions (Direct Mail); **Dave Meyer**, BizzyWeb (Web Marketing) **Jill Gibson Blyth**, Softech Solutions (Customer Relations Management).

# Target Marketing

Focus. Focus. Focus. Pick Your Target and Take Aim with a Variety of Affordable Marketing Tools.

*From the Publisher:*

*The marketing options available to entrepreneurs today have never been greater. At the same time, crossover marketing – integrating more than one marketing tool – has become a standard operating procedure.*

*As a new business owner, you need to become familiar with your options. In today's world, mobile marketing, web marketing, direct mail marketing, Customer Relations Management are essential to driving your sales.*

*New Business Minnesota approached the marketing experts on these pages to share their expertise and offer insights that every new business needs in order to maximize their marketing dollars.*

*The authors will share more information in a free interactive workshop from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sept. 22 at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Bloomington-Minneapolis South (Formerly the Sheraton Bloomington). New Business Minnesota will hold its monthly Startup Meetup networking event immediately following. Register and RSVP at: [www.newstartupmeetup.com](http://www.newstartupmeetup.com)*



## Harness Your Data to Drive More Sales Targeted E-Marketing to Clients and Prospects Will Deepen Relationships, Land More Business.

By Jill Gibson Blyth  
Special to New Business Minnesota

What do you really know about your customers and prospects? Do you know where you found them? How many “contacts” it took before they became a customer? How often do they read your emails? What special offers caught their attention in the past year?

If you have a well-built database, then the answers to these and many other key marketing questions are at your fingertips. It's those answers – when tied into a strategic marketing plan – that will help drive increased sales.

That data is often buried in your software or in your unsorted drawer of collected business cards. To harness it, you need

to get organized.

The key to making money with that information is using it to deepen the relationship with customers and prospects to increase volume, sales and referrals. It's not rocket science... It's Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

A lot of what my firm does is business process analysis and using customized tools to strengthen that process to make your data powerful and leverage it to make you and your company more money.

By bringing together e-marketing techniques, contact management, business process and other tools, you can more efficiently and effectively reach out to your

audience.

### Data Chaos Model

To harness the power of your customer and prospect data, you really need a streamlined process that is easy to use. I have one client who had the right data, but it wasn't coordinated. He used QuickBooks for managing his accounts, Outlook for emailing and Excel for project tracking.

The poor guy was suffering from data chaos – multiple databases with multiple entries for each client. It was muddled up with duplication and overlapping entries. And it took a lot of administrative time to keep it all going.

On a small scale, his inefficient system still allowed him to frequently meet with many of his clients. But as new clients came on board, he lost the ability for face-to-face interaction. Too many faces; too little time. His business was changing and the opportunities to touch customers were diminishing.

The relationship his customers had with him was also declining. If he was out of the office when a customer called in, no one could answer the simplest of questions even though the information was close at hand. Data chaos can make you look really unprofessional.

### Data Power Model

The first step toward the Data Power Model for my client was to simplify everything. We integrated QuickBooks and

ACT! so that ACT! was the data hub. When he gets a prospect now, he first enters it into ACT! Once they become a customer, the information is automatically entered into QuickBooks with a click of the button.

Then we take it to the next level by setting up categories for each client based on needs for targeting email campaigns and other communications – with filters that are created by using QuickBooks data. The sales management process is handled through ACT!

The stage was now set for successful email marketing campaigns. By using categories, you aren't aimlessly sending out offers, you're targeting just those who will be interested. Your emails will be more welcomed if they are actually meaningful to the recipient.

This is how you make money with your data, by turning it into the golden goose that keeps giving back to you.

### Email Campaigning to Drive Sales

- If you have a promotions company, you could target clients who always buy mugs and tell them about a special promotion on mugs. Or you could target them with a sale on coasters that are a good companion to the mugs.

- If you have a hair salon, wouldn't it be wonderful to send an email reminder six weeks after their haircut? Talk about be-

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## Fishing for Sales with Online Marketing

Your Tackle Box Should Have the Right Lures to Catch What You're Looking For.

By Dave Meyer  
Special to New Business Minnesota

Finding customers can feel a lot like fishing: Sometimes the fish are biting and sales are coming in as fast as you can take them, and other times it seems like nothing you do is getting a nibble, much less landing your next big customer.

Luckily, there's a lot you can do online to find customers online.

### Decide What You're Fishing For

You need to know who your ideal customer is if you're going to land their business. Start by outlining who your favorite and most profitable customers are and then answer the key questions they ask before buying from you.

### Grab the Perfect Rod and Reel

Your website is the starting point of every great online strategy. If you don't have a great website to reel in customers, lures won't matter much. And although you can

buy a \$3 rig from Wal-Mart and start casting away, a cheap template site won't be nearly as effective at bringing in big fish, and will probably break down when you need it most.

We suggest WordPress powered sites for their ease of use and ideal formatting for search engines and social media. You can even set up your site to automatically publish to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and more with a single click.

### Fill Up Your Tackle Box

Once you know where to look, you need to have the right set of lures and bait to land the customers of your dreams.

- Search Engine Optimization: Your website needs to tell search engines what you specialize in, including key search terms, if you want customers to find you. What would your customers type in the

"search" box if they were trying to find you online? Make sure you include those phrases in your metadata, page content and links.

- Your company Blog: Your site should include a consistently updated stream of news. Blogs let your customers subscribe to your updates, and are a great way to tell your story and gain your customer's trust.

- Facebook Company Page: You can easily engage Facebook's 750 million users with a page that lets your customers and prospects "Like" you to receive updates. A professional page actively encourages visitors to subscribe.

- Twitter: Twitter allows businesses to share small bits of interesting information with prospects and customers, and can be set up to auto-publish news from your site. Follow your best customers and it's likely that they'll follow you back.

- LinkedIn: The professional social network is great for job-hunting/hiring, branding and connecting with strategic partners or B2B clients. Search LinkedIn groups and start helping your prospects find the information they need.

- Google Places/Yelp/Yahoo Local/etc. – online directories and review sites are a great way to level the playing field with your competitors. When someone searches for what you do and they're physically located close to you, you'll show up higher on the list than others who aren't nearby.

- Email marketing – It's possible to send messages right to the inboxes of your best prospects. Trickle-campaigns can contact customers and prospects without any addi-

tional effort on their part, and you can send messages to your ideal clients with targeted lists.

- Paid advertising – Ads on Google or Facebook let you target specific customers and get your messages to them right when they're searching for your product or service.

### Set the Hook

No matter how many hits your beautiful new site gets, Facebook Likes you have, or followers you have on Twitter, it won't help if you don't show your customer how to buy from you or find out more. Move them to the next step by asking them to sign up for an email newsletter for special offers, tips and advice. Let them join your online club on Facebook, and be sure to reward them for doing so.

### Hire a Guide

Finally, sometimes it seems like there are just too many choices and options, and it can be tough to figure out how to make the Web work for you. Hire a guide to set you on the right path, show you what works and maybe even drive the boat. It's the quickest way to success.

*Dave Meyer is the president of BizzyWeb, a company that creates websites designed to integrate with social media and Generate Buzz Without Getting Stung. BizzyWeb offers social media training and integration, SEO services and seminars on new media strategies. Contact: (612) 293-WEB3 (9323), bizzyweb.com, facebook.com/bizzyweb, or twitter.com/bizzyweb.*



## It's Back: The Return of Direct Mail

Targeted Lists, Custom Offers, Low Costs and Higher Returns Are the Strength of Direct Mail.

By Mike Bann  
Special to New Business Minnesota

You've heard the phrase "Everything Old is New Again." That's exactly what is happening with direct mail marketing. The tried and true direct response technique is surging; data driven, laser focused, highly personalized and full of new tricks.

This is aided by the way technology has converged to not only increase response rates, lower production costs, and effectively drive traffic to your web site or other cross market targets.

For example, the advent of digital printing means you can print small quantities that meet your budget. You can also do Variable Data Printing, which means every piece can mention the prospects by name, company and even be segmented by important marketing data.

Bann Business Solutions has worked with small businesses for many years. A

common result is that when a business does direct mail on its own, it's not getting the full value of the effort.

The best results come from testing, measuring and modifying your mailings over time to find the best package. It's not easy to do. What usually happens when a marketing professional is not involved is the business will mail a piece once and attempt to draw a conclusion as to whether it worked. One and done and the money is wasted.

Direct mail is a process of repeated mailings. You're always trying to identify which offer, mailing list or design produced the best results? It's not a one shot effort. It's definitely worth handing this over to a pro to put together your plan, your design, the text, and the all important offer.

### Overview

At its core, direct mail is pretty simple. You generally have a goal to sell a prod-

uct, service, or mission. You create, buy or rent a mail list. You write copy. You mail it out. You measure to see if your response covered your costs and, if so, you consider doing it again and maybe in a larger volume. Michael Masterson in his book, Changing the Channel says direct mail is a mixture of art and science. The art is in writing the letter and the science is in tracking the results for better future mailings.

### The List

The old adage goes, "Copy is King", but in reality finding the right mail list is job No. 1 for any successful direct mail campaign. A great list will still respond to mediocre copy but a bad list will not respond to even the best of copy. Your house list will be your most responsive and you need to clean it every year. Survey your current list to find out common variables to best source rented or purchased lists.

### The Offer

Every direct mail piece needs a strong offer that creates an incentive or reward for responding. Remember when possible to differentiate your offer based on being a prospective or current client. Famed copywriter Alan Sharpe has 10 rules for a strong offer:

1. Be Specific
2. Make It Exclusive
3. Create Value
4. Be Unique
5. Make It Useful
6. Make Sure It Is Relevant
7. Be Credible
8. Make It Easy
9. Create a Sense of Urgency

### 10. Include a Strong Guarantee

Think of your copy as a four-legged stool; forget any leg and it will be shaky, forget two and it will fall. The first leg is the big idea. What is the unifying concept that holds everything together and best expresses your unique selling proposition?

The second leg is the benefit, the promise you make about how your product or service will help the recipient of your direct mail piece. Remember: the stronger the promise the higher the response rate.

Leg three is your track record. Show proof of your claims ("performance as promised") and include testimonials.

The fourth leg is credibility; where you position yourself and your product or service as leaders.

### Tips

Here are a few tips and some questions for your consideration on your next DM project:

- Envelopes garner a higher response rate than post cards
- Black ink on white paper has by far the highest response rate
- Stamped mail outperforms metered and bulk mail
- Self addressed pieces do better than mailing labels
- Try to always include a PS with another strong offer
- Monitor what your competition is doing
- Stating "No sales person will contact you" will lift response
- Include cross media info (phone #,

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## Mobile Marketing Is On the Move

### Hold the Spaghetti: Targeting Smart Phones and I pads Hits Your Customers Wherever They Are.

By Jeremy Rock  
Special to New Business Minnesota

Most business owners have heard of mobile marketing by now. What they are faced with is a dizzying choice of options and approaches and tactics. Choose wisely and your business grows. Choose poorly and you throw money down the drain.

What's an entrepreneur to do? Many small and startup business owners are prone to use the old school spaghetti approach: "Let's throw it at the wall and just see what sticks." Do it in your kitchen and you only make a mess. Do it as a marketing strategy and you can seriously damage your future survival.

You need a solid marketing plan. By not having one, you risk misleading, confusing, and just plain missing your potential clients.

#### Avoid Invisibility

In today's world of fast-changing technology, it is critical to stay current on how to be visible to your prospects.

It is no longer adequate to simply register your business with the state, design your logo, and drop an ad in the yellow di-

rectory. That may have worked in 1980, but if that is your plan now, you will be invisible to most of today's consumers.

When your prospects need a product or service, they are using a whole new set of tools for their search. Increasingly, that includes their cell phones or tablet devices. Even if you are one of those people who still pulls the six-pound directory book out of the kitchen drawer to look up a restaurant, you have to realize that most of today's consumers don't operate that way.

Today, consumers use mobile technology tools to make a full range of decisions about what to buy, where to eat, where to shop and who to trust.

Did you know that today's consumers would rather lose their wallet than their phone? Did you know that today's users of GPS devices are using those devices to find the businesses that they are seeking on a daily basis?

Keeping that in mind, your business needs to be visible in the places that consumers are looking.

You should think about where your

prospect will turn to find solutions and how you can be there. They may consult their GPS device. They may seek out reviews, testimonials or discounts with their smartphones or tablets. They get to choose how they look. Your marketing challenge is to make sure they can find you.

Once you realize that your prospects are researching in a whole new way, you can begin to form your mobile visibility strategy. Here are just a few of the available channels.

#### Online Directory Listings

Google Places, Yahoo Local, Bing Local, and others have created a great way for their users to see detailed information about a business, far beyond the simple name and number format of the old printed phone directories. Use these services to establish visibility when prospects are using basic web search technology to find products and services.

#### Database Submissions

There are hundreds – maybe thousands – of databases where key information about your business can be submitted to GPS device makers, car companies, mapping companies, and navigation system designers. If you know how to do it, this will help ensure that your business information is widely available to your customers...and theirs.

#### SMS Text Message Marketing

Many companies are finding huge success in driving incremental business through their doors with text message campaigns to their current clients and prospects.

This can be done with tools that collect the mobile numbers of clients and prospects for use in direct offers, loyalty programs, and coupons. If you think this arena of marketing is just for the "big boys," think again. Even a small business with just one location can use this technology at minimal cost.

#### Mobile Keywords and QR Codes

Another use of mobile marketing for interacting with consumers' phones is the mobile keyword or a QR code, which can be deployed in existing advertising and marketing materials. Use these to drive traffic to a specific destination website, special offer or other promotion. This is a method that has been very successful in bringing the traditional and mobile marketing methods together for maximum impact on sales.

#### Conclusion

We are still at the dawn of a new marketing age that can help your business gain momentum through the use of mobile marketing methods.

Amidst all the available options, it may be tempting to try everything and "throw it against the wall to see if it sticks."

Resist the temptation. Spend your time to determine how and if you should be using this new marketing technology to help grow your business.

We welcome the opportunity to talk with you about your business goals, target audience, and product benefits, to see if a mobile marketing campaign is a good fit for your business.

*Jeremy Rock is the business development director of MobileReach LLC, a mobile marketing company that helps local business owners reach their clients and prospects through their smartphones, iPads, iPhones and other mobile devices. MobileReach has a focus on helping local business owners understand their best use of mobile technology in reaching their prospects and converting them into real customers. Jeremy can be reached at jeremy@MobileReachUSA.com or you can visit www.MobileReachUSA.com*

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website, PURL, 2D barcode)

- BRC will lift response on return mail
- Are you taking advantage of your database to incorporate some 1-2-1 marketing?
- Try to capture email addresses and make sure to send a follow up email to any DM piece to further lift your response
- Are you including lift letters in your envelopes?
- If the recipient needs to fill in informa-

tion on the response, are you using the right paper and did you leave enough space?

- In a B2B mailing, are you sending out to multiple decision makers at any one company?
  - Do you know what your breakeven point is?
  - Are you testing, measuring and modifying?
- Direct mail advertising makes more

sense today than it ever has. It is a great tool to drive prospects to the web where you can measure activity. If you don't know what a PURL, GURL, QR, or IMB is then all the more reason to call a direct marketing expert. Because of the low cost of direct mail marketing you can test headlines, lists, offers and more to customers before you mail to a complete list. The bottom line is to test, test, test!

*Michael Bann is co-owner of Bann Business Solutions, a company focused on the arenas of digital marketing, print, promotional products and office supplies. Their highly developed direct mail operation B2B and B2C solutions include strategy, design, list services, production, personalization, fulfillment and mailing analytics. He can be reached at mike@BannBiz.com or (651) 224-5135, ext. 12. www.bannbiz.com.*

## Harness Your Data to Drive More Sales, By Jill Gibson Blyth

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ing a value-add to your customer! Otherwise they forget and call in after eight or 10 weeks and need to get in fast. You can create your own templates and incorporate text and graphics. Swiftpage is what we use because it integrates the email results with ACT! for easy data tracking.

- Sales people can use a good CRM system to remind them when it's time to send letters, cards, schedule follow-up meetings and keep track of the minutiae that is critical to maintain a strong customer relationship. They know you care.
- Send renewal emails out 60, 30 and 15

days before the deadline. I get a great response when I do it. They appreciate that I'm helping them remember. I'm following up on their needs without being asked. That's going deeper with your customers.

- Send out an E-Marketing survey. When the results come back, the data is automatically added to ACT! Now you can have groups that are set up based on how they responded.

- Have a campaign where you send out three emails and then schedule a phone call for your sales people. After that, you may want to mail a marketing piece with your

offer so you have different means of communicating with your clients.

#### Conclusion

The key to growing your sales is to learn how to leverage your valuable data, incorporate it into a consistent marketing effort that builds deeper relationships with your prospects and clients. To do that, you need an efficient process to gather and manage all your customers from first contact to ongoing invoicing.

Stop working harder and ACT smarter by integrating your systems!

*Jill Blyth, President/CEO of Softech Solutions, offers business process analysis, customized contact management software and marketing solutions. She has more than 25 years experience in data analysis and design, is a Platinum Certified ACT! Consultant, and appointed to the Business Partner Advisory Council for ACT! software. She can be reached at (612) 309-5709 or jill@softechsolutionsllc.com.*