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Small Business Marketing: Are We There Yet?

Small business marketing is not like taking a family vacation.

Did anybody take a family vacation this summer? Do you have children of your own, or do you remember what it was like when you were a kid taking a trip somewhere?

I can still remember the family vacations as a youngster growing up. Our famous treks across America in the family station wagon or the rented RV, when the station wagon became impractical. Now with my own family we've taken some similar but generally smaller scale trips.

It seems like one of the most asked questions from a child - "Are we there yet?" Or the other favorite is, "How much longer?" Even families that fly to their vacation destination I'm sure can relate.

What does this have to do with marketing?

I think sometimes (maybe many times) service business owners can become like that child in regards to their marketing. Are we there yet? How much longer?

You work on a web site, or a brochure, or go to networking events and send out letters. Then you wonder when you're going to start getting results. When does the fun start? You know, the fun -- when prospects start calling and others refer and send business your way.

And much like the family vacation, continual asking of are we there yet or how much longer often leads to unplanned stops or detours. You stop to work on other things because there is so much to do and it's sometimes hard to see how this marketing is going to work.

Marketing shouldn't start and stop

Most people say they understand, even if their actions say differently, that marketing is an ongoing activity. Marketing isn't like a vacation where you have a final destination and then you stop traveling because you're there.

Unfortunately, many small businesses get frustrated or burned out when they work on their marketing. They want to know, "how long this is going to take". Are we there yet?

And far too many times, they abandon their marketing "campaign" because it wasn't getting them results and taking them where they wanted to go. But even worse than that, many times the "are we there yet" mentality didn't even let them finish planning or put the idea into action.

Eventually they start planning, or maybe just take off on, another marketing trip. Once again, they start wondering how much longer it will be. Are we there yet?

Marketing needs to be an ongoing, lifelong kind of journey for your business. It takes regular and consistent effort to keep your pipeline full of good, high-quality leads and to keep moving your prospects forward until they become paying clients. That means continuously marketing even when you have clients you're busy working with.

Keep Moving On

The question "are we there yet?" needs to become "how do we keep going?" Yes, you do need to monitor results so you can assess how well things are working to get you where you want to go. When your measurements show you that something is working, keep doing it. In fact, do more of it.

But you can also keep striving to reach new heights as well. How can you continuously improve even the things that are working to get even better, more consistent results?

If you continue to ask the question, "Are we there yet?" you might just stall out on your journey. You see,

eventually you'll discover some marketing strategies that will start to attract attention and generate the response you've been hoping for. It might seem like in fact, "you are there" and so you put the marketing on cruise control.

How to keep moving forward

When you find yourself asking this most asked question, consider any or all of the following ideas to keep you continuously moving forward.

Study up on marketing. There is no shortage of resources out there. You need to find them and begin consuming them. There are lots of books available on the subject. Look for the ones that offer proven, hands-on strategies and tactics. Remember, one or two good ideas now and then could make a significant difference to your business.

Form or join a "think tank" or mastermind group. Find a group of people who care just as much about your success as you do, just as you'll care about their success. This is not a group of friends who will simply stroke your ego. Look for an honest group who will ask the tough questions and demand accountability from each other while supporting each others' efforts.

Attend talks and workshops. If you go and participate fully, you'll often get just as much from the other participants as you will from the session itself.

Get hands-on assistance. Working with a coach or marketing consultant who can help you focus, set goals, prioritize, create action plans and help hold you accountable could be an invaluable experience for your business.

Support from outside resources like this can help you shift from a mindset of "are we there yet" to a mindset of "how can we keep going." They'll help you continue to see possibilities beyond where things currently stand in your business.

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