

**SUPER
CRITICAL
BRANDS**

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**Brand & Marketing
Tips For the Cannabis
Business Owner**

Introduction

Marketing is one of those disciplines that business owners struggle to get to grips with. It doesn't help that there is a massive misconception over what marketing is.

Put simply:

“Marketing is finding out what consumers need, creating or re-creating your brand to meet that need and, letting them know you’ve made the product they need.”

Mark Collins

In even simpler terms, it's anticipating, creating, understanding and satisfying the needs and wants of customers in a profitable manner. Marketing is a deep and broad science that starts with understanding the cannabis consumer as intimately as is legally possible.

When we developed the Super Critical Brands website back in 2020, we planned a blog as part of the new look site. One of the regular features we planned was writing our top 5 monthly marketing tips for cannabis marketers. When we started writing them, we had no idea how many would find.

Marketing is a vast and varied area and although there are 100's of “cannabis marketing agencies” around who quite often specialize in one of two areas of marketing communications such as branding, online, direct marketing, public relations (PR) or social media, they only scratch the surface of one or, maybe, two communication channels.

As well as the promotional element to marketing, there are many other things to consider when marketing your business such as pricing, product development, sales processes, and your staff, among others.

Hopefully this compilation of tips will give you a useful insight into what needs to be considered when marketing your business. We start with some basic fundamentals first, followed by more specific business areas. We also keep the tips quite general so it's likely many of these tips can be applied to your business, whether you are a small company or a multi-state operator with 1000+ employees.

As we often say, marketing is not rocket science, but it is a very scientific discipline – although a very wide and varied one. Even if you only pick up one or two tips in here that you go away and apply to your business, you should see the net result appear on your bottom line.



Tip 1 State your purpose and goals

This is relevant whether you are running a staff of 500 or working as a sole proprietor. This often gets described as a Mission Statement. Building a brand starts with defining what business you're in and your core purpose. This definition or purpose is the basis of your brand, the inherent promise you are making to your customers. For example, Disney's purpose is to "make people happy" and Ben & Jerry's purpose is to "make the finest quality all-natural ice cream and euphoric concoctions with a continued commitment to incorporating nutritious, natural ingredients and promoting business practices that respect the Earth and the environment."

Why is this so important? Because the purpose of your business should be ingrained within all of your staff and guide the subsequent actions that they take. Even if you are the only person in your business it is important that everyone that comes into contact with your company - clients, suppliers, strategic partners etc., fully understand what your business is all about.



Tip 2 Work backwards

Quite often when companies approach me to help them with their marketing they haven't yet established what they are trying to do - they have not any set goals for the business. I struggle with this, because if there are no measurable goals to be compared against, how do you know whether what you are doing is effective?

Start with the end goal and work backwards - whether this is selling or floating the business, getting the business trading without your daily input, or a 5/10 year turnover target. If you know what you need to achieve in order to reach your ultimate goal, including how your business would need to look and be structured, you can then work backwards in yearly targets and start to formulate a long term plan which will ultimately provide you with short term targets - which could be quarterly, monthly, weekly or even daily. Once you know this you can calculate what returns you need your marketing to generate to hit your targets - whether this is revenue, profit, number of clients, average transaction values etc. This will ensure that your marketing is focused on improving the key elements of your business in the short term to ensure you reach your desired destination. It also enables you to quickly highlight where marketing activity is underperforming which can then be promptly addressed.



Tip 3 Ensure there is a market

This seems blindingly obvious but before you invest time and money into your new business venture, make sure there is a large enough sustainable market for your products or services. Don't launch into a new venture with a pure gut instinct or on a whim. Make sure that your concept is clearly thought out and there is a gap in the market for you. It may be that your product or service is highly innovative and creates a completely new market - which is great. But if a market doesn't exist, why not?

Do the research into your prospective customer base and make sure that there will be a demand for what you are trying to do. Most importantly, take note of the feedback that comes back from the research - don't just plough on regardless. Get opinions of business experts and leaders in similar fields as well as your target market. 70% of new businesses fail within the first three years. There are a number of factors that lead to this worrying statistic, but give yourself the best platform possible by exploring the basics.



Tip 4 Identify key target customer segments

Don't just target "anyone who purchases...". The translation of this is "I do not target anyone". Understand where your best opportunities lie and then target these sectors accordingly! How can you hit your targets if you don't know where you are aiming? Try and appeal to everyone and you will appeal to no-one. If you want to appeal to the senior demographic in cannabis, then really understand the market you have identified. Use focus groups, for example, to understand your target customer and segments.



Tip 5 Diverse target markets

First of all, it is critical to identify your target segment. There has to be a need for your product - but the more diverse the markets you're targeting, the less risk to which you are exposed. If 75% of your sales come from the same consumer and that consumer is negatively affected by say the pandemic, then the knock on effect to your business could be huge.



Tip 6 Stick to the Core

When you think of the most successful companies and brands around the world, or even just in your local area, they all have something in common. Firstly, they are good at marketing their business. So why are they so good? This is a very simple question with an equally simple answer. They have a clear core proposition and a clear target audience.

Irrespective of how they actually go about communicating to their target market, if those first two elements aren't defined with clarity and at the center of the business then greatness will never be achieved.

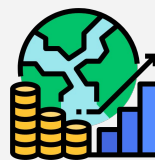
Most small businesses start off with a clear core proposition (although few have a clear target market) and grow through the quality of that core product or service.

However, all too often, business owners get carried away with bolting on additional products and services to their offering - they see revenue making opportunities. The result? A confusing mess. Sometimes the products and services are not even relevant to the same target market and so disparate that it makes no sense at all. All you are left with is a confused prospective customer. Clarity is key! Define what your core business is and stick to it. Become a leader in it, an expert in it. Don't fall into the trap of becoming a jack of all trades... and master of none.



Tip 7 Understand who (or what) you are competing against

All customers have decisions to make - whether it is between two competing suppliers for the same extraction equipment or packaging service, or whether it is to spend their money on an alternative. Find out the most common scenarios they face and which channels they use. The way you differentiate against online competitors may well be completely different to a local competitor based around the corner.



Tip 8 Understand your environment

We don't trade within a bubble. Your canna-business, like it or not, is affected by many external factors such as the economy, social trends, legislation, technology and competitors. Make sure you know what is going on out there so you can adapt your business, otherwise you will get left behind.



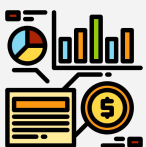
Tip 9 Forget your USP and try a UBP

Everyone always asks you what your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is but who on Earth likes being sold to? Look at it as a Unique Buying Proposition - what is it about your product or service that will make a prospect want to buy from you?



Tip 10 Establish brand guidelines

All companies spend a proportion of their marketing budget (at least in year one) on creating a corporate identity. Hours upon hours can be spent on deliberating over different names and logos for a business. However many companies fall into the trap of deciding on an identity - and then put nothing in place to ensure that the logo is consistently reproduced. I have seen some real horror stories of branding within a business where a corporate identity can be displayed in different colors, sizes, fonts and even inconsistent straplines! This is even more of an issue where different offices are all in charge of their own local marketing. Spend a little extra at the beginning getting some brand guidelines drawn up that detail the acceptable variations of a logo and highlight the no-no's. Then police this religiously. Brand consistency is essential in projecting a professional corporate image, even more so in cannabis.



Tip 11 Use your own data

All businesses have all the answers to their questions within the business. Sometimes it takes someone on the outside to come in and direct them to where the source of this knowledge lies, but it is actually already within the business itself. Do you struggle with identifying who your key target markets are? Take a look back over the last three years of sales data and plot where your business has come from historically - this would be a logical starting point. Are you struggling to know where best to concentrate your efforts? Look into the greatest profit generating areas of the business, and if you don't know the profit margins on certain products and services, calculate them. Are you failing to understand what drives your customers to purchase from you? Ask them. All the information you need will be in your business somewhere.



Tip 12 Think for yourself

Too many companies get obsessed by what their competitors are doing. Yes it is important to be aware of what they are up to, but don't get too hung up on replicating what you like about what they are doing. If you do, you will only ever be a market follower, not a market leader! This behavior will stifle innovation.



Tip 13 Forecast performance

This seems quite an obvious tip but it always amazes me how many companies are plodding along on a weekly, monthly, yearly basis with no targets or forecasts for their business... they merely just exist. Unless you set clear targets and then forecast sales accordingly, how do you know if you are on target with where you want to get to (assuming you want to get somewhere)? By analyzing actual performance against forecasts you can quickly see where there is going to be potential areas of concern - whether this is cash flow, sales pipeline, capacity, stock etc. On a basic level, create a spreadsheet and create a sales forecast for the year.

From the top-line sales figures you will then drill back into different areas which will have their own necessary forecast in order to contribute to that top-line figure. One of the key areas that will feed into this is marketing, as your sales figures are a direct result of your marketing activity. If, for example, your first quarter does not hit its forecast and you need your second quarter performance to increase by 25% on your initial forecast - then guess what? You are going to need your marketing activity to work harder to generate enough additional revenue to make up for the deficit.

You, therefore, will either need to generate more enquiries into the business, improve your conversion rate or get your average customer spend up. Alternatively you can blindly hope that you get lucky and a big order drops.



Tip 14 Share your vision with your staff

Too many business owners don't share their vision with their staff. However, it is your staff that represent your business and should be exuding your brand values at all times. Passion in what you are doing is crucial to success - how can your staff get passionate if they are just seeing it as a paycheck? Get them excited and enthusing about the future vision of the business - and the cannabis industry itself!



Tip 16 Make it obvious

It is estimated that the average consumer (whatever that is) is exposed to around 2000-5000 marketing messages per day. This is a phenomenal amount of information we absorb on a daily basis, quite often subconsciously. This means that in order for your brand or product to stand out, irrespective of whether you are in a business to business or consumer environment, your message needs to hit home what you are trying to say. I lose count of how many logos, company names and identities that I see on a daily basis who fail to do this.

To give yourself any chance in the marketplace the key is to make it obvious what you do as a business. If your company name itself does not clearly convey what the business does then make sure that it is always displayed with a clear strapline that does. The signage on your building, the livery on your vehicles, your stationery, and your email footer all provide you with a marketing opportunity to project your brand. Make sure you don't miss a massive trick by trying to be too clever. Keep it obvious and make it simple. Only when your brand is widely known and recognized can you consider dropping the descriptive.



Tip 15 Don't treat digital marketing as a numbers game!

This is something I hear all the time - "it is a numbers game; knock on enough doors and you will get enough sales". Whatever you do, do not apply this mindset to all your marketing as it is nonsense. It is not a numbers game. A scattergun approach to marketing is costly, time-consuming and ineffective.

A targeted approach to marketing reduces the numbers but generates far greater returns. You could potentially buy 50,000 cannabis contacts from a data provider and e-shot them all and get no return. Your expected return is not gauged by how many you send (so don't work on a theory of say a 2% return) but on the quality and timeliness of the message. Spend your money on getting this part right and you will be generating response rates far higher than industry averages.



Tip 17 View it as an investment

Too many people view marketing as a necessary evil. They see it as a cost because they "need a brochure" or they "have to have a website." Every single marketing communication should be viewed as an investment to generate more value for the business - whether this is through enquiries, orders, an increase in customer spend or awareness of your existence (which eventually leads to enquiries and orders). Every dollar invested in marketing should generate a much greater return. If you understand that marketing is an investment and not a cost, then you will spend your money much more wisely! Make sure you understand the reason why you are investing in any specific activity - don't just do it for the sake of it.



Tip 18 Regularly monitor KPIs

Work out what the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are within your business and regularly measure and monitor them. From a marketing perspective the obvious ones are:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Number of enquiries | Total sales value |
| Enquiry source | Average transaction value |
| Conversion rates | Average profit value/margin |
| Number of new clients | Customer churn |
| Number of transactions | |

If you know all of these figures you can keep an accurate finger on the pulse of how your marketing activity is performing. It will enable you to clearly see where there is any bottleneck in the process or cause for concern - are you generating enough enquiries, is the conversion rate high enough, are you making enough margin per transaction? Once you know these you can make informed decisions that can only improve the performance of your marketing and your business.



Tip 19 Calculate lifetime client profit value

Do you know how much, on average, a client is worth to you in profit over the course of their lifetime? If not, analyze your historical sales data so that you know this figure. How do you know how much you are willing to spend on winning a client if you don't know how much one is worth to the business? In order to do this you will need to know the average transaction value, the average profit margin, the average number of transactions a client makes in a year and the number of years, on average, a customer stays with the business. This will help you modestly calculate the lifetime profit value (as it does not take into account referred business).



Tip 20 Test & measure

It is incredibly difficult to predict what marketing communication activity is going to work so start small and test and measure the results. The biggest mistake you can make is not measuring the return you get from a specific campaign and continuing to waste money on a flawed concept. If your return on investment is not acceptable - refine what you are doing and test and measure again. If it continues to yield low returns - STOP DOING IT AND INVEST IN AREAS THAT ARE WORKING!



Tip 21 Be different

Are you different? Are you really different? What sets you apart from other suppliers of your services? Nothing? Then create a point of difference. In order to get noticed and get heard, it is important to be different (especially in cannabis). It doesn't have to be a crazy radical idea but it must be something that sets you apart. When I ask many companies what their point of difference is, quite often the reply is "the quality of their service". This is fine in maintaining existing clients but it isn't going to win you any new ones as prospects have not experienced your service yet. To help you identify how you can be different look for client pain! What issue can you solve that currently isn't being serviced in the marketplace?



Tip 22 Include a 'Call to Action'

Too many marketing departments create communications that look great but miss the mark when it comes to the "message" and including a "Call to Action". Every communication should have an objective - whether it is a sale, to generate an enquiry, for the recipient to do something or to point them to somewhere else for further information. Make sure you make it obvious!



Tip 23 One message at a time

Don't try and sell everything you do in every communication. It can become tempting to make a campaign more cost effective by cramming in multiple "calls to action" and trying to appeal to everyone. The most effective campaigns are the simplest. Not only are they more effective but it makes tracking and measuring campaigns much easier.



Tip 24 Avoid website vanity

It doesn't matter what your website looks like, it matters what it is delivering. There is no point having a fantastic looking site if it doesn't serve any purpose. Don't get one for the sake of it. Work out what you want it to do for your business and then design it with this in mind! Then use Google Analytics to see how it is performing.



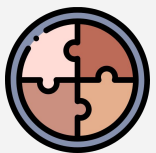
Tip 25 It's all about them

Many cannabis companies go into the sales process telling prospective clients what they do, how good they are and talk about what they can do for them. Flip this on its head. Don't talk about your company at all. Talk about THEIR business. What do they do, what makes them tick, what issues do they face? Learn as much as you can about them before you even talk about how you work. This additional information provides you with much more insight into what they want to hear.



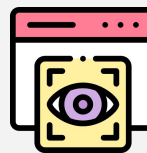
Tip 26 Keep it simple

The majority of humans like simplicity. Information we can easily absorb and understand is far more likely to produce the desired result. No Jargon, no "War and Peace," just good old plain English and a good image can speak a thousand words.



Tip 27 Appeal to all the senses

We are all individuals and we all absorb information in different ways. Different personalities behave in different ways. In most personality profiling systems (such as DISC), there are usually four different personality types. In NLP terms you have visual, auditory and kinesthetic individuals. The chances are your client base and prospect list is a mix of all these types of people. Some will be information-based people who want detail, others will be very direct and just want as little detail as possible and see the information presented in an easily digestible format - perhaps in a visual manner. It is natural, particularly in a very small business, to communicate in the way that you like to be communicated with yourself. This, however, will alienate the majority of your potential customer base, so avoid this temptation. Make sure that throughout all of your communications you are hitting all the senses!



Tip 28 Maintain visibility

All businesses operate in different ways - some require a high turnover of small transactions across a wide customer base, while others rely on a few large orders from a handful of clients. With this in mind the purchasing process and sales cycle can vary drastically from minutes, to days, to weeks, to months. Whatever type of business you are in and however long your sales process is, the key element is to maintain visibility - otherwise you will get forgotten. To do this effectively set up a regular "touch point" for your prospects and customers. It ensures you do not get forgotten and maintains a dialogue with your contacts. For example, these marketing tips I post and direct people to are a non-intrusive way for me to keep in contact with my prospects. Newsletters, seminars, social media and news snippets are also a good way to do this. Remember if you are not in the forefront of your prospect's mind for the service you provide - your competitor will be!



Tip 29 Use AIDA

If you have never heard of AIDA before, it is an acronym to follow when devising any marketing communication whether a sales letter, advert, website homepage, press release, e-shot or direct mail piece. Whenever formulating a communication bear this in mind - and after you have your first draft, review it to ensure it follows this format.

A= Attention - Grab the reader's/listener's attention. This is usually the headline or the opening line of a communication. The bigger the impact the better.
I=Interest - Now you have their attention, you need to maintain their interest in the message.
D=Desire - Now you have them interested you have to create a desire towards your product or service - this is the hook.
A=Action - Now that you have them hooked, what do you want them to do - phone, visit a website, email, do something, go somewhere? So many communications forget the action! It is a critical mistake - you need to make it as easy as possible for your audience to take impulsive action. If you always apply the AIDA structure when creating your communications, you are giving yourself the best chance of success - mind you, the content still needs to be spot on as well!



Tip 30 Maximize existing client potential

Most businesses place 95% of their marketing effort into winning new clients - they view it as the lifeblood of the company. However it actually costs six-seven times more money to attract a new client that it does to extract the same value from an existing client. When you "close a sale," do not view this as the end of the process - it is only the beginning. Once you have a client on board, they will stay a client for life if you look after them and don't provide them with a reason to look elsewhere. You should be farming your existing client base and regularly keeping in contact with them - don't let them slip through the net, especially in a heavily networked space like cannabis. Market yourself regularly to your existing client base - don't neglect them in the quest for new clients.



Tip 31 Identify your sales bottleneck

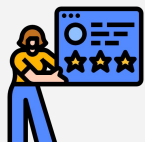
Sales are the lifeblood of every organization so it is critical to analyze performance regularly to identify any bottlenecks in the process. Imagine your business has a giant filter that all leads and enquiries enter - first of all, are you getting enough enquiries? If not, what can you do to create more? If you have enough leads but the conversion rate is poor - why is it? Is it because you are attracting the wrong type of enquiries, or are your salespeople struggling to close or is there a glitch in the process? Is price the obstacle? Are customers repeat purchasing? If not, why? Find out where the problem lies and rectify it. The usual impulsive reaction to poor sales performance is to generate more leads or change your sales team but this may not be the core issue.



Tip 32 Engage your people

The purpose, goals, and values of your business are important tools in engaging with your staff and ensuring you are all sharing a common ideal. Don't view your staff as numbers, or a production unit, or a means to an end.

Every single member of staff is a critical extension of your brand. They all represent your business and every time they come into contact with anyone - whether a phone call, face to face or via social media they are affecting perceptions of your company - either positively or negatively. Make sure you communicate with your staff regularly and that they understand what you are doing and why you are doing it. External customer care can be directly measured against the level of internal customer care - so ensure you treat your employees with respect and keep them engaged.



Tip 33 Get customer feedback!

Everyone needs to actively look to identify areas where they are underperforming - otherwise how can we improve what we are doing? Regularly (at least every 18 months) carry out a customer survey to give clients the platform to complain and praise. This is obviously pointless unless you analyze the responses and put improvement measures in place as a result of the findings. An unhappy cannabis customer that never complains will never return!



Tip 34 Your best salespeople are your customers

What holds more weight than the glowing positive words of a satisfied customer? Exceed expectations and a customer will wax poetic about your business to everyone they meet. Word of mouth has been the most cost-effective form of marketing since time began, so make sure you have all the mechanisms in place to ensure you are benefitting from this. What do you need to do? The basics are to have a referral mechanism in place, use case studies and testimonials and social media platforms such as LinkedIn recommendations. When you say it, it sounds like bragging. When your customers say it, it means something!



Tip 35 Focus on outstanding service delivery

This is arguably the lynchpin of a successful marketing strategy. You can be brilliant at promoting your company and generating a never-ending influx of enquiries and orders - however if you do not deliver outstanding service you will soon be forgotten. As I mentioned, it is six-seven times more expensive to win a new client than service an existing customer so if you do not regularly offer outstanding service then your clients will migrate elsewhere and you will need to spend more money just to stand still! In fact, if you are a new business and you cannot offer outstanding service delivery - don't waste your time and money starting up. There will always be someone who is offering this at a competitive price!



Tip 36 Discover your online opportunity

Too many companies are unaware of the online potential of their business. They often make unsubstantiated assumptions on whether online is a channel which holds any potential for their company at all. However, this is easy to test. Visit <https://adwords.google.com> and type in a phrase which you feel potential customers would be typing into to Google to find suppliers of your products or services. Not only will this process open your eyes in terms of alternative phrases that customer may type in, but it will also give you an idea of the volume of global and domestic searches for these various terms. This gives you the hard data to make an informed decision as to the potential opportunity the internet holds.



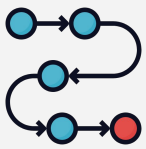
Tip 37 Forget market share

Too many businesses measure their performance by the share they have of their defined market. On the face it, this appears to be a sensible metric of performance. However, the flaw in this approach is that it is always historical information - quite often up to 12 months before data gets published to provide an accurate figure. It is much better to look to the future and not the past. Concentrate on your own performance - new customers, customer churn rate, average transaction values, sales and profits. It doesn't matter where you have been - it is where you are going that matters!



Tip 38 Ask 'How did you find us?'

Most cannabis businesses do not have the mechanics in place to accurately track where customers have come from, so every time you get a new enquiry simply ask, "How did you hear of us?" Make sure you log the response. This method of tracking requires all staff to ask this question and log the answer but it enables you to identify what is working and what isn't!



Tip 39 Idiot proof processes

Investing in effective marketing campaigns which generate sales opportunities is pointless unless you have the processes in place to ensure that these are dealt with efficiently and effectively. What's more, if you have staff responsible for taking that enquiry and converting it into a sale and then into a satisfied customer that repurchases, you have to make sure that the process is documented so that absolutely anyone can follow it. We know it is six-seven times more expensive to acquire a new customer than to generate the same value from an existing customer and 70-90% of your revenue over the next 12 months will most likely come from your existing client base. Therefore ensuring that you have relevant simple processes in place will make you much more profitable! Don't assume anything, don't think anything is too obvious to include - just document it!



Tip 40 Handle complaints efficiently

Everyone has customer complaints. Even if you think you have never had any, you have - it is just that the customer didn't tell you. This isn't good. The quiet customer who feels let down, disappointed, even angry, will dwell on their experience and then share it with others. The customer that doesn't complain will take their business elsewhere. The customer who is vocal in their complaint is providing you with an opportunity, strange as it may seem, to enhance your reputation in that customer's eyes. If you can efficiently and effectively deal with customer complaints you can very quickly turn a negative into a positive - by exceeding their expectations with regards to how you resolve it. Not only will your company be perceived in a much more positive light - but that customer will love to tell others of how well you dealt with him.

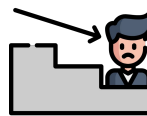
Positive PR!



Tip 41 R.E.H.A.S.H

REHASH stands for 'Remember, Everyone Has Another Sale Hidden'. If you take this mentality into your canna-business, you will be amazed at the number of new opportunities that will suddenly appear. Too many companies think that their marketing efforts end with the sale - however this is when the greatest marketing opportunities arise - such as up-selling, cross-selling and referrals. Next time you make a sale simply ask your new customer whether they know of anyone else who may also be interested in your product or service, or whether they have any other interesting projects coming up.

You will be amazed where carrying out this simple non-intrusive discipline can lead you - new projects, their client base, suppliers, different departments in the same business, sister companies, friends and family! And the best thing - it doesn't cost you a penny and takes ten seconds of your time!



Tip 42 Lose unprofitable customers

Lose customers, lose sales... are you mad?! Well, believe it or not, not all of your customers will be profitable. However the problem is that not enough cannabis companies actually know which clients are profitable and which aren't. You need to know your figures - profit margins, frequency of purchase, time and resource assigned to servicing that client - otherwise you will never know. 80% of your business will come from 20% of your customers - you need to know who these are and start to work out how to phase out your non-profitable client base. Turnover is vanity - if they aren't profitable, lose them.



Tip 43 Love your brand

First of all you need to have a company with a strong purpose / mission and strong values which when combined with your identity, your communications and your product or service delivery becomes a strong brand. You have to feel an inherent part of that brand - it is not something you are projecting but something you truly believe in. If you believe everything your brand stands for and communicate this with passion, then that will be instilled within all your staff, your customers and everyone you meet. Once your people are living the brand, running a successful business becomes a whole lot easier.



Tip 44 Don't assume

This is the biggest mistake that companies make when communicating with customers and prospects. Even large companies with huge marketing budgets 'assume' all the time - they assume that everyone knows who they are, that everyone understands what they do, that everyone knows the benefits of using them. However one of the easiest mistakes to make is to use jargon and language that makes perfect sense to you, but is gobbledygook to your target audience. We all do it. I have fallen into the trap of assuming everyone knows what ROI is (Return on Investment) and when I first set up on my own I assumed that most people understood what marketing was all about (how wrong I was)! If someone doesn't understand they will switch off and your message will never get through. Most of us have friends and family who have no understanding of what we do - test your messaging on them first - just make sure that they are being completely honest with you! If you are going to assume anything, assume that your audience know nothing.



Tip 45 Value your time

I am more commonly hearing canna-business owners say they are not investing in more traditional methods of marketing because new media such as social media is "free." In terms of capital outlay, indeed social media as a channel is appealing as there are no up-front costs. However social media is by no means "free." As with any marketing activity, you must test and measure your return from it. Try this exercise over the next month and then decide how well social media as a marketing channel fits with your business goals. For the next four weeks, keep a daily note of how many minutes per day you are spending on social media - creating content, building connections, commenting on status etc. across all the main sites such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. At the end of each week add up how many minutes you have spent and divide this by 60 to give you an hourly figure (you may be in for a shock).

Then multiply your hourly rate by this figure to provide you with an "opportunity cost" of how much that time is worth to the business. If you do not work on a basic hourly rate simply take your average monthly profit figure from the last six months and divide this by 168 (based on 21 working days and eight hours a day). Then take a look at the sales (and more importantly the profit) that this channel has brought into the business over the same period. Has that activity generated a positive return on investment? Don't get sucked into the mindset that because there is no physical outlay of cash that it is not costing you anything. In addition, you will find that you will end up spending more time on these channels because they are enjoyable. Discipline yourself and remember that hourly rate!



Tip 46 Create the Marmite effect

You can guess what this is about! Marmite - you either love it or hate it! I hate it for the record (disgusting stuff). But because I have such strong feelings for Marmite, albeit negatively (and probably cleverly fueled by Marmite itself)

I am aware of it, it is in my consciousness. I will never buy it - but I also know that for every Marmite hater, like me, there is a massive Marmite lover who buys tones of the stuff on an annual basis. So what? If Marmite was a middle of the road product that wasn't so strongly flavored and appealed pretty much to everyone wouldn't they sell more? Well no, actually. They would sell a lot less. The key term here is "Love". Because so many people "Love" it, rather than "Like" it, it has propelled Marmite into a massive brand! Now how could you apply this principle into your own business? Stop trying to appeal to everyone and not offend anyone. No one on planet earth is universally liked. Why is Lady Gaga such a worldwide phenomenal success? It certainly isn't because of her singing ability. She divides opinion - and because she does, she has created what is probably the biggest pop music brand in the world right now! I am not saying you need to walk around in a suit made of sausages, but by being different and creating that Marmite effect you will start to get an audience who "Love" what you do! And people in love will tell the world!



Tip 47 Evaluate the audience

As a business owner it is very easy to be sold to and many of us end up spending hundreds to thousands of dollars on different marketing communications that someone has convinced us is the answer to all of your marketing prayers. This could be a swanky new website, advertising space, SEO and CPC campaigns, email marketing, PR, a rebrand, direct marketing or even just directory listings. They sound very convincing and you start to believe that actually this could be money well spent... STOP! THINK! Some of these activities may well be right for your canna-business, but many will not be. Someone is trying to sell you something so of course they are going to tell you it is a "no brainer" and they will try and make you decide before you have had a chance to think. Ever heard the old chestnut "this offer is only available today" or "you have first option for your business category - I can't guarantee it will be available tomorrow."

NEVER agree there and then to give it a go. Always buy yourself some thinking time... and in that time consider the following: who is my target audience - what are their demographics? Does this match the target audience of this channel? Is my target audience likely to respond to this channel? Can the provider offer any proof that it has worked for similar companies in the past with hard evidence? Are there previous users I could ask? Is it within my budget? How many new customers would I need to generate (profit not sales) in order to achieve a return on investment? Does it fit with my overall goals and objective? I have seen companies try and sell high value goods (\$1k+) via an e-shot to blanket consumer data, companies advertise in their trade press (to their competitors), spend thousands on a new website which has no call to action and can't even be found online and pay for listings on consumer-focused directories when they are targeting businesses. We all have the ability to stop and think! If you don't have time - then find a reliable person who can do this for you. It will save you a lot of money!



Tip 48 Plug the bucket

We all know that a leaky bucket is inefficient! You have to fill it up with water a lot more times and you need to work much harder to achieve the same result. If you just stopped for five minutes and plugged the hole then you would be able to work much more effectively. It is a similar analogy to the two woodcutters who are having a competition. The woodcutter who lost couldn't believe it because he could hear the other woodcutter keep taking breaks as the chopping fell silent. Afterwards he asked how he did it and the winning woodcutter informed him that he wasn't taking breaks, he was sharpening his axe. In marketing terms, too many companies focus all their attentions on winning new customers,

usually at the detriment to their existing ones. What is happening, like the leaky bucket, is that they are just continually replacing the customers that they have lost due to poor service, lack of attention, no communication, etc. Before you go on a big marketing push take a look at your customer churn. How many customers on average do you lose per year? Ask yourself: why? If you can identify the reason why and plug the hole, then the new customers that you add are going to overflow your bucket... and you are going to need a bigger bucket! Existing customers are also around seven times less expensive to get the same value of business from than a brand new customer. Remember that marketing doesn't stop with the sale... that is only the start of a long relationship.



Tip 49 Keep your finger on the pulse

Don't drift into inertia. Quite often I come across cannabis companies who are not tracking how their business is actually performing - they have become oblivious to the current situation. This usually happens in larger organizations where extracting and managing data becomes more difficult. Your business is an organic entity - it is always changing and moving. You need to keep a grasp on the financial metrics of your business and where your business is coming from and potential opportunities.

This will allow you to spot and respond to any issues much quicker and potentially avoid them before they actually arise. Don't become the large juggernaut which is out-manuevered by much smaller and nimble competitors. If you currently can't extract the data you need to make decisions - invest in a system which will enable you to do so!



Tip 50 Reflect before dismissing

As mentioned within Tip #20, it is critical to test and measure all marketing activity that you undertake to evaluate whether the investment has been worthwhile. Have you had a positive return from it? If the answer is no - don't dismiss that marketing channel straight away. First of all spend some time working out why it did not work. Was the communication targeted at a specific audience? Was this the audience that the communication reached? Did the communication look good and have impact or was it very wordy? Was there a clear message, did it convey client benefits? Was there a clear and strong call to action? Was there a follow up process? If not, should there have been?

You see, it is all so very easy to dismiss a channel such as e-mail marketing, social media, online, leaflet door drops, direct mail, events and advertising as not working - but unless you work out why the channel did not work you are likely to make the same mistakes again. Before dismissing it, ask yourself those questions and if you answered no to any of them, then go back and try and refine it. It may need redesigning, rewording, or perhaps the data set you are sending it to needs filtering down. It may be that the channel is wrong for you - but make sure before you write it off. Also remember, what works for other cannabis businesses may not necessarily work for you!

Summary

So there you have it, our 50 top cannabis marketing tips. We doubt you've found anything jaw-droppingly amazing but hopefully a lot of obvious common sense tips you can easily apply to your business.

If you found this collection of tips useful we would love to hear your comments on which ones in particular, so please feel free to post your comments on LinkedIn. And if these tips have sparked off a train of thought in your head that perhaps you need to re-evaluate the role that marketing plays within your business, then we would be delighted to discuss this with you.

As you can see, as we said at the outset, cannabis marketing is scientific but- it's not rocket science. The discipline of cannabis can be made more difficult if you don't get the fundamental basics right. All of our contact details are listed below so please feel free to subscribe, follow us or connect with us on LinkedIn.

Thanks, **Mark Collins, President. The Super Critical Brands and Highly Capitalized Network**



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