

Top 5 Marketing Ideas Under \$100

By Nanette Miner

#1 POSTCARDS

Postcards are a wonderfully marketing technique because they are so versatile. You can use them to announce specials, introduce new staff members, celebrate customer's birthdays, and for many other creative "events." Postcards are good marketing tools for two other reasons: (1) the recipient doesn't have to make a decision about whether or not to read your mailing – usually as soon as they see it, they have read it, because they don't have to open an envelope. (2) The postage on a postcard is much less than it is for a letter – so not only have you made a definite impression on the customer, but you've saved yourself .15 cents in the process.

Postcards can be purchased from office supply stores or catalogs such as Paper Direct and Baudville with appropriate designs for your salon or spa business. Or, you can custom-create postcards yourself using blank postcards purchased at the office supply store or an on-line service such as www.VistaPrint.com.

You can do a regular monthly mailing to 250 customers or potential customers for under \$100.

#2 REGISTER YOUR DOMAIN NAME

A website is an essential marketing tool for any *kind* of business; you can register your salon domain name at sites such as www.Register.com and www.Register4Less.com for under \$100, for two years.

Once your domain name is registered you can slowly start to build your site with items such as pictures of your salon, profiles of your stylists, and monthly or weekly specials, you can even sell gift certificates from your website. All of these marketing techniques will cost additional money to design and make functional on the website – but it all begins with having your domain name registered. Don't delay! It is getting more and more difficult to claim your salon's own name on the web – somebody else, in another state, may already have it registered.

#3 MAILING DATABASE

You'll want a marketing database of all your customers. There is a rule of thumb in sales that says "it is six-times more expensive to attract a new customer than it is to keep one you've already got." What this means for you is that you should consistently market to the customers you already have; it's a better use of your resources. The first step to achieve this is to create a database of your customers. This should include their name, mailing address and e-mail address if you can acquire that as well. Many timed customerd stop visiting us simply because thy have fallen out of a routine; they haven't purposely decided to stop doing business with us. So if you have your current customers in a database,

and, as new customers come in you add them to your database, you will be able to consistently market to the people that already know and love your work.

#4 ALERT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO OPENINGS IN YOUR SCHEDULE

Using a broadcast e-mail, or a telephone call-in line, you can easily fill empty slots in your next day's schedule by alerting your customer base (remember, you collected their e-mail when they became customers) to technician's openings for the present or following day. For instance you might send a broadcast e-mail to all of your customers that Susan has three manicure openings today, Tuesday, at 10am, 2pm and 3:30pm. Another approach would be to change your out-going recorded message at the close of business each day to announce the openings that are available the next day. This then requires you to simply train your customers to call in the evening – when they won't be disturbing regular business – to see if there is an opening the next day.

#5 DO COOPERATIVE MAILINGS

It costs just as much money to send one piece of paper as it does to send four – so why not gather like-minded businesses together or other businesses in your mall/area to cooperatively mail together? Each business (up to four) can have a one-page flyer that is inserted into a cooperative mailing envelope for the regular .37cent first-class postage. If you combine your mailing lists as well, you will be marketing to a much greater audience than your own customer list. If the other merchants are unwilling to share their customer lists publicly, they can do their own mailing of the four pieces and you can do the same for them. Now, instead of a customer coming to your mall or plaza for one merchant – they can come to visit four merchants! If there are a number of businesses in your area, you can maintain this technique throughout the year with a rotating list of merchants participating on a regular basis.

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Nanette Miner is a small-business marketing expert and co-author of the book, *101 Media and Marketing Tips for Salon Owners, Stylists and Managers*.