

# Penny-Pinching Marketing

How to market on a really tight budget

By Megy Karydes

**W**hether you never started marketing or economic factors forced you to curtail marketing, rest assured, there are still ways to promote your flooring business on a tight budget. It's only natural to think about pulling back on marketing during tough economic times, but experts say this isn't the way to go. Rather, increasing your marketing now so customers will continue to support your business should be standard protocol. But don't think marketing your business has to be costly. Here are some effective and affordable marketing strategies you can put to work immediately.

## Get the Media's Attention

Does it seem to you that your local media tend to favor some businesses but not yours? This isn't just a coincidence—that business probably has a consistent media strategy in place.

- To garner your share of media attention, generate a press release whenever you debut a new line, secure a major new contract or host a seminar on what homeowners should consider when choosing wood floors.
- If you don't have something new or exciting to share in the near future, why not send the media a tip sheet? Unlike a press release that gives a reporter information about your company or product, a tip sheet offers a list of tips or nuggets in a bulleted or numbered list fashion. Tip sheet topics might include: "Five eco-friendly ways to clean hardwood floors," or "Six things homeowners should consider when choosing a wood flooring contractor." The goal is to tie it to your company or business offerings.

## Print and Internet Marketing Campaigns

Marketing campaigns can involve other methods besides just 4-color ad pages.

- Direct mail is tried-and-true. Postcards, in general, are a powerful and effective marketing tool. And with recent printing developments, they are cost-effective, too. Popular printing services include [www.VistaPrint.com](http://www.VistaPrint.com), [www.OvernightPrints.com](http://www.OvernightPrints.com) and [www.RushFlyers.com](http://www.RushFlyers.com).
- E-mail marketing campaigns are another cost-effective way to keep in contact with your customers. E-mail marketing services like Constant Contact allow you to



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send e-mail newsletters for pennies; but first make sure you actually have something new and worthwhile to offer, such as a new product or service. Otherwise, potential customers will simply view you as a spam peddler.

- Having an Internet presence is a must. If you're not ready to manage a fully-fledged Web site, complete with images and e-commerce capability, invest in a simple brochure site with your company's name, location and contact information.

- Blogs are also a great way to promote your new products or events. You can write about new things happening in your industry and let your customers "inside" your world, and it's free when you use a blog service like [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com).

### All the Rest

After all of those options, there are still other budget-friendly tricks left in the bag.

- Participating in speaking events is a good way to get your business some attention. Offer your speaking services at local home improvement shows. Speaking in front of large crowds might not be your cup of tea, but it becomes easier when you speak about things you know

and love to do.

- Some small businesses are banding together, pooling their ad budgets and buying co-op ads. Rather than generating a few small ads in key magazines, these groups are able to develop bigger ads for even greater visibility, all with the same ad budget.

- Here's one marketing technique that is very inexpensive, yet rarely done: sending a thank you card to a customer, vendor, media editor, or anyone that has helped your business. Most businesses don't do this, so you'll stand out if you are the flooring business that makes the effort. Try making your sincerity more evident by hand-writing your cards.

With a little planning and thought about your business goals, marketing your business can be one of your most rewarding and successful endeavors. Best of all, it won't break the bank. ■

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*Megy Karydes is a Chicago-based writer and marketing consultant. Her clients include small businesses and interior designers. She says having wood floors installed throughout her home was one of the best decisions she ever made. E-mail Karydes at [Megy@KarydesConsulting.com](mailto:Megy@KarydesConsulting.com).*



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