



Marketing Collateral 101

by Meg Guillory

Our daily lives are saturated with advertisements and marketing messages. Practically everywhere you look someone is trying to capture your attention and sell you on the idea that what they have to offer is the best of the best. Estimates now show the average American sees over 3,000 of these messages every day, talk about overload! As a business in today's market you are probably wondering how you are supposed to stand out in this crowded marketplace long enough to earn your potential customer's hard earned dollar... well it all starts with your marketing collateral!

What the heck is marketing collateral anyway?

Basically, marketing collateral is any printed element used to promote and sell your ideas, goods and services. Smaller businesses may have basic marketing collateral such as business cards, letterhead, envelopes and perhaps a brochure or a flyer; while larger businesses may have sales kits, catalogs, mail-outs, data sheets, charts and graphs, specialty products and more. Whether your business is small or large, your marketing collateral is used to visually communicate who you are and what you do, to your target consumer. Your marketing collateral acts as part of your sales team and represent you to the public, so make them as good as your finances allow.

How do you create effective marketing collateral?

SET A GOAL. Initially you must decide what each of your collateral pieces will be used for. Your business cards provide pertinent contact information and may be used in initial meetings with potential customers. A brochure may provide a brief overview of your company's benefits and capabilities; while flyers or direct mailers could be used to promote a special event or sale. Letterhead and envelopes support brand identity and may be used for follow up communication or invoicing. Sales kits provide a more detailed insight into your business and/or services and can work as a secondary form of communication to keep your business top-of-mind and recognizable.

DEVELOP A THEME. Each element of your marketing collateral must work to convey your company image. Implementing a consistent theme throughout creates brand recognition or an awareness of your business' existence and availability. People buy from who they know; generally the more recognized brands achieve the most sales.

CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE. Most businesses have a specific target. A simple way to determine your target consumer is to ask yourself who, what, when, where, why and how questions. Who is your end user? What do they do? When would they seek your services or products? Where do they live? Why should they choose your business? How can you reach them? Answering these questions help you understand your audience's demographics and psychographics, or what drives them to buy.

DETERMINE YOUR MESSAGE. Once you have determined who you are selling to, you must be able to inform them about what you are selling and then motivate them to make the purchase from you and not your competition. It is imperative that your information and facts are accurate and truthful. Use proper grammar and check spelling and punctuation, something as simple as a misspelled word can reflect poorly on your company's image. Include a call to action or incentive for

your audience, such as a discount or special reward, as a way to track the return on your collateral investment. You can even generate a sense of trust by including past client testimonials or listing any performance recognitions your products or services may have received. Remember to keep the message simple. Your marketing materials have a matter of seconds to capture someone's attention, so make sure the benefits of doing business with your company can be comprehended quickly without causing any confusion.

IMPLEMENT STRONG CREATIVE.

Are your marketing materials attractive and engaging? Do they persuade the potential buyer to inquire further? The look and feel of your materials greatly affects whether or not you make the sale, so every detail matters. There are countless ways to visually communicate your message and achieve a one of a kind look. For example, on a brochure, flyer or sales kit, use graphic elements, charts or graphs to make facts such as your capabilities, costs and/or business location stand out. Use photography or images to suggest reality in your customer's mind. Then, add captions to help convey necessary details. A unique shape or size can make your brochure stick out in a stack of hundreds. A catchy or humorous slogan could make your business memorable. Even the paper stock you print your materials on can set it apart from your competition. Really, the possibilities are endless when it comes to creativity, just be sure these creative aspects compliment your overall message and are consistent. Don't forget to include your logo on everything! Continually use the same color selections and font styles on all your materials. An inconsistent look can confuse your customer and negate your brand's identity.

SEEK HELP. Not everyone is creative and witty; don't let this defeat the effectiveness of your collateral! There is no shame in seeking help. Hiring a third party, such as an advertising agency, who offers solutions for copy writing, editing, creative development and market research can greatly improve your chances of creating successful marketing collateral.

You are now equipped with all the necessary knowledge to create outstanding, eye-catching, unique marketing collateral elements! Just remember, businesses are a dime a dozen, but with proper research and a savvy strategy, your business can stand out from the crowd! 

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